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SOWETO: URBAN POLITICS, POVERTY AND RACE IN APARTHEID  
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SOWETO: URBAN POLITICS, POVERTY AND RACE IN APARTHEID SOCIETY.

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ABSTRACT.

The following work is concerned with the relationship between urban poverty and politics in general, and with the way in which race intrudes on this relationship in the South African context in particular. More specifically it is concerned with political resources in the form of mobilized manpower, leadership and articulated organization - with the fashion in which these are created, (or fail to be created) by the urban poor, with the manner in which they, as political actors, project these resources in pursuit of social power and influence, and with the role of the state in containing the subsequent pressures upon it.

Following a brief introduction in which the inter-penetrating factors of race, poverty and urbanity are linked to prevailing conditions in the black townships of Johannesburg, the first of the two main sections considers the subjective basis upon which Soweton politics evolves, patterns of intra-communal political competition, and, in the light of the 1976 riots, the capacity of South Africa's urban blacks to challenge the apartheid system. The essence of the second section lies in the various strategies enunciated by the white minority system to undercut black claims to political power. These policies include the distribution of welfare to build system supports, coercive and quasi-coercive forms of action, and the so-called 'total strategy' where positive and negative sanctions are blended into an unprecedentedly consistent counter-revolutionary package. The concluding chapter analyzes the preceding data with an eye to both urban political theory and the political future of South Africa.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: SOWETO AND SOUTH AFRICA

#### THE TOWNSHIPS AND THE SYSTEM

##### I. URBANIZATION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOWETO

South Africa is rapidly urbanizing, and as in other parts of the world, particularly its underdeveloped areas, the flow of people from rural to city areas is a hallmark of present-day society. Many factors have played a part in this pattern of human movement in the South African case, including economic development encompassing the emergence of secondary industry at certain growth points, the discovery and exploitation of important mineral resources in specific areas (such as the Witwatersrand), and the attraction of wage labor to rural blacks faced with increased territorial dispossession since the late 19th century. In 1904 less than 25% of South Africans were in the urban areas, nearly 43% some fifty years later.<sup>1</sup>

All segments of the country's racially heterogenous population have been, (and remain), affected by the magnetic attraction of the city yet today the majority of new urbanites are drawn overwhelmingly from the black community, - despite the fact that it has been the consistent policy of successive white South African governments to institutionalize measures to hinder their movement towards the major urban conurbations. It is difficult to produce accurate statistics on the size of the urban black population: official census figures are skewed by their tendency to refer to only "qualified blacks" i.e. those who have the legal right to live and work in the urban areas under the influx control regulations,<sup>2</sup> and in many cases, including that of

Johannesburg, blacks were excluded from official population counts well into the thirties in a fashion making longitudinal analysis of urban black population growth partial to impossible. Measuring the size of South Africa's urban black group also involves the difficult problem of separating out "urban" from "non-urban" elements in the city,<sup>3</sup> and this is complicated by the high proportion of transient migrants in the handful of major metropolises at any given time. At the same time it is generally accepted that the discriminatory and internationally notorious "pass laws" have basically failed in their central purpose of inhibiting the growth of the black population in urban areas designated part of "white" South Africa, that the number of black urbanites is expanding more rapidly than urban-dwellers drawn from any other of South Africa's racial groups, and that this tendency is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.<sup>4</sup> According to figures produced by the Department of Economics at the University of Pretoria, South Africa's urban black population numbered close on five million in 1970 as against three million in 1904. According to another source, this group, the "men of tomorrow" as he deems them, make up 45 percent of the total population of South Africa's cities.<sup>5</sup> In 1960, to the chagrin and dismay of apartheid's planners, 32 percent of all blacks were in the urban areas,<sup>6</sup> and in most respectable circles, including some at the center of Afrikaner nationalism itself, it is now basically conceded that the grand apartheid objective of a white urban South Africa drawing on a reservoir of transient black labor is little more than fantasy. This view is supported by a paper presented to the Urban Revitalization Congress held in Johannesburg during 1977 in which it was estimated on the basis of current trends that there are likely to be 22 million people in the urban areas by the year 2000, 15 million of whom will be black.<sup>7</sup>



The consequences of progressive black urbanization over the last eighty years have been manifold, for the South African economy and for cultural developments in the black communities. In the absence of this process with its tendency to generate cheap black labor at industrial growth points, it is inconceivable that the local mining industry, the historic motor of South African economic development, would have grown from a ramshackle operation to its present gargantuan proportions. Similarly, the black urban influx has assisted the transformation of tribal identities into the personality attributes associated with modern man, and it has led to new patterns of social stratification in black society unrelated to kinship, lineage or historic legitimation. Most tangibly however, black urbanization on the fringes of South Africa's "white" towns and cities has led to the emergence of black concentrations whose very existence poses problems for a political order priding itself historically upon white domination and racial segregation at these centers of the political system. There are numerous examples of these segregated ghetto-like communities - Cato Manor near Durban, Nyanga, Guguletu and Langa outside Cape Town, New Brighton in Port Elizabeth, and a host of smaller concentrations on the outskirts of minor towns such as East London, and the mining communities of Welkom and Kimberley. But the most important above all are in the Pretoria-Johannesburg-Vaal complex, particularly the black townships twelve miles to the South of Johannesburg, South-Western townships as they are officially called, or more commonly since 1963, Soweto.

Soweto's origins, like those of the other major urban black communities, are small and date back to a decision taken in 1904 to establish a black "location" at Pimville near Johannesburg.<sup>8</sup> By 1900 some 60 thousand blacks had already been attracted by the

prospect of wage labor to the Johannesburg region,<sup>9</sup> and in 1918, when their numbers had progressively increased, (barring a short reversal period during the Boer War), an additional township, then called Western Township, was created some eight miles from the town center. In this case the white town fathers were motivated by a massive influenza in the unsanitary environment of Pimville, strategically situated as it was near the municipal sewerage works. A third township was later cited at Orlando during the early thirties when the metropolitan black population had risen to close to 140,000 in size.<sup>10</sup> During and immediately after World War II, when industrial expansion attracted an additional 150 thousand blacks to the area, more land was added to the locations to further extend the township community, and the result today is expressed in Soweto, one of the largest concentrations of its type on the African continent, 33 square miles in size, with over 66 thousand houses and a population variously estimated from 668 thousand to well in excess of one and a quarter million inhabitants.<sup>11</sup> Today, blacks make up 60 percent of Johannesburg's total population and the Johannesburg black population is in its turn, (even by conservative estimates), some three times larger than that of South Africa's capital city i.e. "white" Pretoria.<sup>12</sup>

TABLE 1: GROWTH OF JOHANNESBURG'S BLACK POPULATION 1900-69

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Blacks (to the nearest thousand)</u>
1900	60,000
1927	137,000
1939	244,000
1946	395,000
1969	518,000

Ref: Patrick Lewis - City within a City. The creation of Soweto.

(Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Press. 1969 P1.)

## II THE ISSUES: POLITICAL ACTION AND POLITICAL RESOURCES

The focus of the following study is not upon the mixture of factors, some universal in form, others more parochial in nature, which have stimulated and shaped black urbanization in South Africa. Nor for that matter is it directly concerned with the dynamics of the process where race and power considerations have blended to concentrate black urbanites in such deeply disadvantaged circumstances as those experienced by the inhabitants of contemporary Soweto. Issues of this nature, despite their intrinsic importance, are only echoed indirectly in the following pages which are concerned above all with the political consequences rather than social causes or black movement to white South Africa's cities. The dimensions of this movement are, needless to say, a source of some concern to the formulators of apartheid with their notions of a racially exclusive metropolitan South Africa, and what we hope to convey in the following pages is some understanding of what it means for political purposes to be an urban black, and what it means for contemporary and future South African politics that so many individuals define themselves in this fashion. What Soweto connotes for the politics of white South Africa, and what white South Africa in its turn connotes for the Johannesburg urban black community is the central thread binding the following pages.

No matter how deeply felt their social disadvantage, South African black urban poor are in the last analysis politically insignificant unless they can back the efforts to remedy their condition with political resources in the form of mobilized manpower, skilful leadership and articulate organization. This reflects the fact that while poverty as a social condition can be approached from a variety of perspectives (what is a lack of wealth to the economist is a lack

of status to the sociologist), poverty from the point of view of politics implies perhaps more than anything else a lack of resources, (manpower, leadership and organization), to convert the discontent of the deprived into concrete and substantive forms of political action. In this sense, this study is also concerned at a level of abstraction behind South African politics with the interface between political action, power and political resources on the part of resource-scarce actors,<sup>13</sup> with the dynamics generated when a social group lacking many of the human, material and organizational attributes associated with the human, material and organizational attributes associated with effective political performance aspires to power, tries to create power, uses it and responds to its use by relatively advantaged or more resourceful political actors.

South African history is largely analogous to the efforts of a racially exclusive elite to monopolize social resources thereby depriving the majority of the population of the human and material means to relieve its disadvantage. Urban black communities such as Soweto reflect this process in a subtle interplay between politics conducted at the local and national levels. It is for this reason that lurking behind the various universal conceptual and descriptive categories of the following pages there is the persistent issue of how urban blacks accumulate the necessary measures of mobilized manpower, leadership skills and organizational forms to effectively challenge the power of apartheid. To the extent that they experience difficulty in doing so attention is drawn to the constraints imposed by the system on Sowetons as disadvantaged yet urban political actors. Since race is a critical element of all South African politics, questions also arise as to how race fuses and interpenetrates with the conditions of urban poverty confronting the majority of Sowetons

to influence the challenges they address towards the political system. Alternatively, the following study focusses on the fashion in which South Africa's white elite organizes its own political resources to head off the competing claims of the townships.

### III SOWETO IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SYSTEM

The importance of these issues is a reflection of the importance of Soweto to the South African system. In the first place, the political importance of Soweto stems from its ranking among South Africa's largest metropolises and the fact that its twenty-four townships, variously described as Johannesburg's labor camp or dormitory city, bears testimony to the fallacious and sociologically naive principle of apartheid to reserve the metropolises, (subject to their reliance on cheap black labor), for the exclusive purposes of the privileged white minority. Under the best of circumstances, urbanization in the resource-depleted climate of the under- or semi-developed world strains political and administrative arrangements with an intensity unfamiliar in the historic experience of either Western Europe or the United States.<sup>14</sup> Soweto, a significant proportion of whose population lives close to or below the poverty datum line in conditions of substance urbanization, likewise creates enormous problems . . . for the effective working of administrative structures and for political decision-making of the distributive variety at the polity center.<sup>15</sup> Yet beyond this, Soweto presents a political and ideological challenge to the doctrine at the heart of apartheid, (the so-called Stallardist doctrines) that the black man is transiently in South Africa's cities only to minister to the needs of whites. This in turn mirrors the basic contradiction in South Africa today - between economic growth with its unselective meshing

of groups into networks of functional interdependency on the one hand, and political doctrine aspiring to ensure the basic segregation of the races on the other. Soweto stands at the nexus of this dialectic. While it would be naive to reduce South Africa's future merely to the occurrences taking place in the black townships, political developments in these areas, the form they take and the responses they elicit from the white elite, and some of the more critical litmus tests for assessing political change in the foreseeable future.

Soweto is in any case more politically vital than most other urban black concentrations in South Africa because it is undeniably the most volatile. This may or may not have anything to do with the fact that population growth in congested and land-hungry Soweto is comparatively higher than any other urban black area, but it certainly has much to do with the coincidence between appalling social economic deprivation in Johannesburg's townships and the complete lack of any meaningful and institutionalized channels for political expression. Urbanization, it should be emphasized, is not necessarily synonymous with political disorder, nor for that matter are the urban poor always that radical political mass detected by earlier theorists in the slums and shantytowns of most Third World cities.<sup>16</sup> In Soweto however, poverty, class, race and the authoritarian political order combine to produce a highly combustible mixture which has in the past, (and will doubtlessly in the future), explode with incalculable ramifications for South Africa, the region and the international system. Since 1976 Soweto has in fact become a symbol of black resistance in South Africa both on a domestic and world-wide basis. What occurs in these particular townships is therefore likely to set the pace and pattern for political developments beyond their boundaries, in geographically immediate areas and further afield.

The political significance of Soweto also stems from its location in the very heart of South Africa's economic heartland i.e. the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal complex, the hub of the country's present economic growth despite various policies to decentralize the local economy. Although it is physically separated from the city of Johannesburg by a narrow strip of basically deserted veld, Soweto's townships are within minutes reach, via the so-called "Golden Highway", of South Africa's primary commercial and financial center. Hundreds of thousands of Sowetons employed in secondary industry pour in and out of Johannesburg on any given working day, and although Sowetons are barred from working along the East Rand by influx control regulations, their labor fuels production in the dense string of industrial townships to the west of the city. As the 1976 strikes and boycotts indicated, most essential services and the distribution network in Johannesburg depends heavily on Sowetons in low-grade roles and certain specific areas of affluent white Johannesburg, including its central business district, derive their life-blood from the consumer power of the nearby townships. Most of the blacks manpower at the rockface of the Witwatersrand mining industry lives in strictly regulated compounds sited in or near the mines and under the authority of the various large mining houses. Yet many Sowetons from the townships' numerous hostels fulfill a variety of important roles at groundlevel. This highlights the importance of Soweto given the central role of the Witwatersrand mines to the South African economy. Indeed, as the events of 1976 indicates, what happens in Soweto inevitably reverberates throughout the Witwatersrand economy and then further afield to influence developments throughout the national economic and political system.

Soweto is also the crucible for many of the major social and

cultural transformations taking place in the black community to which we have already tangentially referred. The South African economy draws heavily on migrant labor from the rural sector and the variety of underdeveloped states on its periphery, and a good proportion of its numbers, lured by the myth of "N'Goli", (the "city of gold") eventually congregate in the Johannesburg region - mainly in Soweto but also in a number of smaller nearby black townships. In this sense Soweto becomes both a focus and a pacesetter for the various individual and collective cognitive changes and adjustments normally accompanying urbanization.<sup>17</sup> More than in any other urban black area in South Africa it is in Soweto that the complex mediations between tribal, township and European society take place, and to the extent that South Africa represents African society as the place where western norms and values have taken the greatest hold on the indigenous black population, it is Soweto that is in the forefront of the South African process. To the degree that ethnicity remains labile for social existence and behaviour in Soweto it is likely to remain relevant for action on the part of blacks in other urban areas. To the extent that black city-dwellers define themselves as members of a repressed class in these areas, the tendency is likely to be more pronounced, intense and crystallized in the black townships of Johannesburg than in any other . . . And as the 1976 and more recent 1980 riots suggest, whether, how and if Sowetons react to protest against apartheid sets much of the tone and provides most of the cues for other urban blacks to articulate and project their political feelings.



#### IV SOWETON POLITICS: THE PARAMETERS

The political behaviour of Sowetons themselves is however influenced by a number of essential factors one of which is certainly the inter-calary suspension of the community between tradition and modernity. In Soweto . . . cross-pressures emanating from a modern industrial environment interpenetrate, fuse and conflict with a variety of pre-industrial, if dynamic, norms to produce sycretistic political values and behaviors. Thus Soweto is not a homogenous community beyond its racial exclusiveness but is actually differentiated along both vertical and horizontal planes. Along the vertical, community cleavage mirrors the ethnic heterogeneity of the townships' population for Soweto is more diversified in this sense than any other South African urban black concentration.<sup>18</sup> Zulus who dominate the black townships of Natal, also make up about a quarter of Soweto's population, yet every one of South Africa's major tribal groupings are represented in the community in numbers ranging from tens of thousands to mere handfuls.

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF ETHNIC GROUPS IN SOWETO

Zulu	38.8 percent
Southern Sotho	13.6 percent
Tswana	13.0 percent
Xhosa	9.7 percent
North Sotho	9.3 percent
Shangaan	7.0 percent
Swazi	5.0 percent
Venda	3.6 per cent

Ref: Research Section, Johannesburg City Council,

Non-European Affairs Department.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that Soweton politics cannot be reduced to a simple ethnic arithmetic with intra-communal coalitions and alliances corresponding to sharp tribal boundaries. In contemporary Soweto are all of the urban pressures normally diluting ethnic affiliations or remodelling them to effectively meet urban demands and serve urban purposes.<sup>19</sup> Yet, even if ethnic attachments in the townships are neither fixed nor static, ethnically-related cognitions and behavioural forms are not irrelevant for political patterns within the community and between it and the wider environment. Few Soweton identities, ethnic or other, are fully crystallized, yet ethnic norms are constantly reinforced by both the in-migration of rural dwellers and by the intention of apartheid policy to manipulate ethnicity as a means of community disintegration and political control.

The system in fact provides incentives for black ethnic-type political participation, and even though there is some recent evidence to suggest that the white elite is supplementing ethnicity with class manipulation as a mechanism of control, there are still important takers in the townships for the social and political rewards offered to actors in the ethnic game.

Industrialization is however in the process of elevating class as an alternative focal point for township identities, so that today class and ethnicity fuse to produce complex networks of affiliation in the mainstream of Soweto's political culture. Since industrialization has impacted evenly on the township community, internal horizontal strata have also appeared which cross-cut the fact that all Sowetons are black and forced to operate beneath the rigid race strata imposed on blacks by white South African society. Today, a small but influential bourgeoisie composed of professionals, proprietors and

individuals in managerial roles has emerged at the social apogee the townships and altogether constitutes about ten percent of its population. Beneath this group is a comparably small stratum of self-employed traders, grocers, greengrocers, butchers and sellers of wood and coal who run the approximately 1,500 small businesses in the community.

TABLE 3: COMPOSITION OF SOWETON SMALL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

<u>Business</u>	<u>Number</u>
Grocer	361
Green Grocer	217
Butcher	208
Wood and Coal	134
Restaurant	97
Fish Frier	79
Dairy	56
Tailor/Dressmaker	39
Offal Dealer	28
Herbalist	25
Hairdresser/Barber	24
Hardware	22
Undertaker	17
Dry Cleaner	14
Market Stall	14
Doctors Consulting Rooms	13
Soft Goods	11
Cobbler	11
Draper	11
Carpenter	10
Others	85
	<u>1,476</u>

Ref: Johannesburg City Council - Research Section,  
Non-European Affairs Department

Further down the ladder on its lowest social rungs is a massive proletariat, roughly eighty percent of the township population differentiated between employed, unemployed, skilled and, above all, semi-skilled and unskilled laborers.

TABLE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF TOWNSHIP OCCUPATIONS

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Professional	1.8
Proprietor/Managerial	4.7
Skilled Labor	1.1
Semi-Skilled Labor	22.2
Unskilled Labor	56.8
Administrative/Clerical	3.9
Pensioner	1.9
Housewife	2.5
Unemployed	3.4
Unemployable	1.6

Ref: Edelstein, Ibid, Table VIII.

It is important to emphasize that much in the way of ethnic identities, it is fatuous to reduce Soweton politics to the interaction between clearly delineated classes. Classes clearly exist, but class consciousness is, on the whole, only readily evident at the social margins.<sup>20</sup>

As an immense literature indicates, class and culture intermix in a manner critical for the political behavior of urban communities, for the development of a participatory ethos, the emergence of collective political norms and for action in support of them.<sup>21</sup> Generally, the more class and cultural cleavage, and the more each reinforces the other, the less cognitive and behavioral unity there is to be found in the political arena.<sup>22</sup> In Soweto moreover, politically salient cleavages exist between generations and between indigenous, permanent and more transient members of the community. Generational

cleavage in Soweto reflect universal sociological processes intensified by familial disorganization induced by the policies of apartheid. The result, as a period since 1976 seems to indicate, is that young urban-born township-dwellers are, generally, more radical in matters of politics than previous generations, either indigenes or migrants to the community. Cleavages between indigene elements in Soweto and transitory labor reflect the focal point of the townships for migrant movement, differential socialization in the urban culture, a legislative framework where "legal" migrants under the pass laws and separated out and obliged to live in specially constructed government compounds, and, perhaps most important of all, economic competition under conditions of scarcity. Both of these cleavages, the generational and the indigene/transitory, feed the complex yet shifting subjective melange out of which township politics behavior arises.

The political behavior of Sowetons is also profoundly influenced by a mass of racial considerations, for the divide between the city of Johannesburg and its surrounding black townships is far greater than the few miles separating the two entities. These differences involve history, culture, politics and administration, all subsumed under the racial mythologies of local society. Each in their individuality lends distinction to Soweto as a community, and together they impart certain unique features to the community context within which Soweto-politics takes place.

Soweto is, in the first place, a racially exclusive community from which non-blacks are barred and to which blacks are confined in their social membership. All of Johannesburg's blacks (with the exception of mineworkers and domestics) are obliged to live in Soweto (or in one or the other of the lesser areas reserved for blacks in the city's environs), and this means that at the conclusion of each

working day Johannesburg literally divides into two separate parts across whose racial boundaries there is a bare minimum of social transaction. In effect, the townships are little more than labor camps on a grand scale, socially encapsulated entities forced back upon themselves in a manner rare for urban concentrations. This reflects the fact that it has never been the intention of the local or national authorities to develop Soweto as an integral part of the regional complex, and today with the important exception of black labor fueling the local economy, beyond cultural divisions, Soweto's organizational structures and behavioral norms are at least one step removed from those of the adjacent white community. In practice, the social and organizational contacts of Sowetons are basically defined by their immediate residential location, and for political purposes or whatever they enjoy very little of the stimulation and cross-fertilization normally found in and between communities under modern and interdependent urban conditions, apart from that which they themselves can muster.

It is also important for the style and substance of Soweto's politics that an interconnecting web of racial legislation pervades virtually every aspect of township life. Soweto is in all probability one of the most intensely regulated urban communities in the world, and within its boundaries even the most mundane of individual and collective social acts are embedded in a web of racial laws backed by the coercive power of a state intent upon controlling virtually every facet of black city existence. There are very few social areas in the townships today free from the watchful and wary eye of the white authorities, least of all political areas, where autonomy of action and organization on the part of township dwellers is deeply feared and systematically discouraged. As apartheid has centralized power and

extended and rationalized its instruments of control, a political climate has developed in the townships characterized by endemic fear and a deep sensitivity to the costs and risks of political action. Needless to say, these conditions, generate powerful constraints on political mobilization.

This physical encapsulation of Soweto, its racial control and its racial exclusiveness create, in toto, a peculiar environment within which township politics take place. Firstly, the physical boundaries of communities always affect perceptions of mutual interest,<sup>23</sup> and in Soweto, whose boundaries are also racial, the result is a sense of internal political integration largely cross-cutting intra-communal differences of both wealth and culture. In Soweto today, precisely because the indiscriminate application of the race laws spreads humiliation so evenly, there is a communal esprit de corps which is not an accurate reflection of the actual cleavage in the community. Repression can work to disintegrate poor communities and deprive them of leadership resources. Yet in Soweto, where repression is distinctively and harshly racial in delineating the dominant from the subordinate, the effect of influx control, police terror and the denial of land tenure - all acts imposed by white on black - is to produce a pervasive sense of community crisis. This in turn facilitates mutual identification within the community and a strong feeling of community commitment.<sup>24</sup> In these circumstances, the capacity of leadership and organization to accurately represent community interests is far greater than in alternative circumstances where the community is less clearly articulated.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, because so much in Soweto turns on race, the community is particularly amenable to mobilization along the lines of race symbolism and ideology. Political movements in the Third World

may conceivably take on class characteristics, yet in underdeveloped areas class oriented forms of political association are inhibited by small-scale production and political mobilization leans heavily on cultural factors. In Soweto, race is the most emotive form of identification so that the trials and tribulations experienced by blacks as a repressed group in white dominated society are responsible more than anything else for generating political energies and directing them to challenge the apartheid system. At the same time, the process whereby race consciousness becomes concrete political weight is seriously hindered in a variety of ways. The legislatively-induced racial compacting of Soweto facilitates the spread of political information through the community,<sup>26</sup> but it also means that Sowetons must rely largely upon themselves and local organizations in projecting their political demands. Because Soweto is so carefully described as a community, both socially and physically, it is very dependent upon endogenous sources of leadership and organization. Because Soweto is a community created by the State rather than one forged in the crucible of independent action on the part of its inhabitants it is also more difficult to promote the extended spirit of political activism often found in poor communities basically breeding themselves.<sup>27</sup> Finally, because of its physical unity as an urban concentration, Soweto is also easily surroundable and thereby more easily demobilized in a fashion which does not occur in circumstances of free inter-community movement.<sup>28</sup> Carrying political action the few short miles from Soweto to Johannesburg is, as 1976 indicated, extremely difficult.

Soweto's politics are finally and perhaps most fundamentally influenced by the fact that while the townships are not slums in the generally accepted sense of the term, they are inordinately poor communities to labor and under the variety of pressures confronting



the urban poor as political role-players. There are differences on the measurement of the poverty datum line in the complex environment of Johannesburg, so that there are no absolutely reliable and authoritatively-regarded figures on the number of black families subsisting in conditions of dire poverty in the area. Yet expert opinion generally concurs on the fact that probably half of Soweto's population is in a state of abject poverty, if not in townships such as Dube with their distinctive middle-class aura, then certainly in the appalling conditions of townships such as Jabavu and White City.<sup>29</sup> Some recent surveys show that two-thirds of Soweto's workers live below a poverty datum line of R11 per week, while a recent study conducted by the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce reveals that three out of five Soweton families are unable to maintain the most marginal of living standards. The high percentage of income spent on food in the area - estimated in the region of fifty to sixty percent of average earnings - also attests to the existence of harsh socio-economic conditions.<sup>30</sup> It is also important to bear in mind that the so-called "township middle class" is also relatively poor and that its status in the community derives less from wealth than from factors of occupation and education.

The implications of this economic stranglehold on the politics of Soweto are manifold: its pervasiveness intensifies the boundedness induced in the community by virtue of its segregation, it further concentrates social transactions and fuels pressures to conform to community norms to the advantage of community integration. Perhaps most important of all, it breeds radicalism among the young and unemployed who are sensitive to the relative affluence of nearby white Johannesburg. Relative deprivation does not of course always convert into political protest, yet there is quite substantial evidence

suggesting that the 1976 disturbances were closely linked to the sense of economic constriction experienced by Soweto as a community.

Since 1976 the conditions of poverty in the townships have actually worsened with the effect that the economic gap between white Johannesburg and black Soweto has substantially widened. Urban black income has generally risen over this period, and the affect has been to attract growing numbers of migrants from the impoverished rural homelands. Yet while township population has escalated, income has not risen fast enough to keep pace with sharp increases in living costs. Urban blacks are today caught between rising unemployment and spiralling inflation. Between 1973 and 1978 these costs rose an estimated 21 percent in five major township areas, including Soweto where inflation is given added momentum by massively raised housing rates and rentals as the local administration board seeks to recoup its losses to property sustained during the 1976 riots.<sup>31</sup> It is a horrifying measure of the situation that the overall costs of living in Soweto are rising almost twice as fast as the national average or those of affluent white Johannesburg.<sup>32</sup> At the same time the number of jobless economically active males in the Johannesburg-Pretoria area has risen precipitously and it has been estimated that one in five Soweto households are without any form of income whatsoever.<sup>33</sup> This may well be a conservative estimate since it is based on the number of registered unemployed: countless Sowetons do not register their joblessness, either through sheer hopelessness or because they are not legally entitled to work in Johannesburg under the pass laws in any case.<sup>34</sup> In the meantime all available evidence suggests a worsening of the unemployment and underemployment trend among Johannesburg's black population, particularly individuals in the younger age groups: by the beginning of 1978 most of this group of unemployed had lost their jobs in recent months and were finding it increasingly difficult

to acquire alternative employment, even in lowly-paid heavy-labor categories normally left to the migrant workers in the black community.<sup>35</sup>

#### V A PREVIEW FORWARD

Bearing this complex of considerations in mind. Chapter One begins with an examination of political culture in Soweto and in South Africa's black townships more generally. The subjectivities brought to politics by individuals or collectives are never fixed, yet the way in which individuals - be they poor or not - perceive and respond to political systems in like manner is vital to both the forms of collective behaviour they display and the political power they can accumulate.

It is in this light, following upon a brief discussion of the cultural and political problems involved in tapping township subjectivities under the peculiar conditions of South Africa, that we proceed to evaluate the psychological basis of political behaviour in Soweto. The demands made by Sowetons on the political system, cognitions of race relations, support patterns in the townships, the extent to which a culture of poverty is an identifiable part of the township make-up,<sup>36</sup> and popular perceptions of the means and ends of political change, are all measured against the critical factor of whether or not a revolutionary mentality pertains in the community under study.

The pre-existence of such psychologies determines the direction which community political resources are deployed, but political leadership, organization and factors related to community integration are vital in determining the extent to which political resources can be created and shaped to actually challenge the political system. In Chapter Two therefore we move from the cognitive to the behavioral

to examine political competition in Soweto in the light of the extant literature on political competition in poor urban communities. An explicit effort is made to explore the political heterogeneity of the townships, the various styles of political action arising out of a complex environment in which poverty combines with interactions between traditionalist, nationalist and clientalist modes of political expression, and the implications of this melange for the capacity of Sowetons to maintain racial solidarity and project political weight.

Protest-type politics represent one avenue for social groups to channel their political demands and the substance of Chapter Three is composed of the problems and prospects facing Soweto in adopting forms of political action, boycotts, strikes and the like, at the more extreme ends of the continuum of political participation. The decision to focus on these modes of political action is motivated by the fact that there are so few alternatives available to Sowetons in attracting government attention to their claims, the result being that the majority of their political energies and skills are fed into protest-type activities. This is particularly the case with the relatively mobilized township youth, and for this reason we have sought to analyze protest as a remedial technique for Soweto on the basis of a case study of the Soweton students in the 1976 disturbances, the most recent, and arguably most important exercise in protest politics by the township community.

The relationship between political actors and the political system is a two-way street. Part One dwells upon some of the major features of Soweto as a political community with reference to the impact of the system upon the race-poverty-politics dynamic in the townships. Part Two is specifically concerned with the much wider question of system performance in relation to the attempts of Sowetons to mobilize

politically and back their claims with appropriate categories of leadership and organization. In Chapter Four, the first in which we begin to focus on the South African system in relation to the townships, we investigate what is perhaps the most important techniques available to power-holders in steering political challenges by poor communities i.e. the use of welfare to purchase the compliance of the poor in return for material rewards linked to the latter's imperatives of subsistence. In this chapter, moving through the historic experience of Soweto, our purpose is to demonstrate how racial ideology has consistently constrained the white elite from reaping the potential political benefits involved in bending welfare to political purposes. We also attempt to show how the current Nationalist government - which is probably more alert to these considerations than any previous administration - attempts yet basically fails in building system supports in the townships.

Chapter Four strongly indicates that welfare may not be a viable technique of political control in South Africa's race-dominated environment, in which eventually the elite is obliged to examine and implement alternative means to limit the political weight accumulating in urban black concentrations such as Soweto. Chapter Five is concerned with coercive and semi-coercive measures adopted in this direction. In Chapter Five we examine the role of the police in managing townships politics. Since the question cannot be

systematically dealt with in the absence of fairly detailed knowledge of the psychologies and organization of the South African police, the focus is on the police rather than the townships. As one of the most powerful techniques of political control used by the white authorities is the pass system with its ability to hamper black movement to the urban areas, this chapter also examines the influx

control system, its evolution, its problems and its general capacity to check township mobilization. Much as the previous chapter, and in contrast to Part One whose underlying theme is the townships and poverty, Chapter Five tends to focus on the implications for politics of race and the workings of the broad political system.

The sixth and penultimate chapter takes up the notion of revolution raised during the discussion of township political culture and is concerned with the efficacy of "total strategy" as a counter-revolutionary technique, - once again on the basis of the supposition that the political developments in the townships are so fundamentally intermingled with broad systematic tendencies that the one cannot be understood without departing to the other. In this light our focus spreads out from the narrow confines of Soweto to embrace issues of governmental reorganization, civil-military relations in the current South African setting, homeland policy and a variety of other factors behind township boundaries but fundamentally related to the question of township control. In a narrower sense we give attention to cooption as a mechanism for politically controlling the townships with particular emphasis on the problems it experiences as a counter-revolutionary device in the South African context.

The concluding chapter returns to the basic relationships between race and urban poverty articulated by the politics of Soweto. In this chapter, Soweto is linked to the extant literature on urban poverty and politics, to demonstrate both how the literature explains Soweto and how Soweto, with its powerful racial dynamics, in turn generates questions and concepts for the literature.

FOOTNOTES.

<sup>1</sup> Tomlinson Commission on the Development of the Bantu Areas, P. 27.

<sup>2</sup> The rights of blacks living in Johannesburg and other urban areas is governed above all by Section 10 of the Bantu Urban Areas Consolidation Act, No. 25. 1945. This states, inter alia, that no black "shall remain for the period of more than seventy two hours in an urban area...." unless "(a) he has since birth resided continuously in such area; or (b) he has worked continuously in such area for one employer for a period of not less than ten years or has lawfully resided continuously in such area for a period of not less than fifteen years, and has thereafter continued to reside in such area, is not employed outside such area, and has not during either period or thereafter been sentenced to a fine exceeding fifty pounds or to imprisonment for a period exceeding six months; or (c) such Bantu is the wife, unmarried daughter or son under the age at which he would become liable for payment of general tax....."

<sup>3</sup> On this problem and others confronting comparative urban research see, inter alia, RR. Alford, "The Comparative Study of Urban Politics," in L.F. Schore and H. Fagin (eds.), Urban Research and Policy Planning. (Beverly Hills: Sage, Urban Affairs Annual Reviews. No. 1): N. Anderson, Urbanism and Urbanization, (Leiden: E.G. Brill, 1964): H.J. Fichter,

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<sup>4</sup> Tomlinson Commission, ibid, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> M. Edelstein, What Do Young Africans Think? Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1972), p.4.

<sup>6</sup> Republic of South Africa: Bureau of Statistics, Pretoria, 1968, a-22, quoted in Kevin Stocks, "The Largest Urban Section," The Star (Johannesburg), 1st December 1977.

<sup>7</sup> The Star, 9th August 1977.

<sup>8</sup> On early township history see Patrick Lewis, City Within A City: The Creation of Soweto (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Press, 1969), p.4.

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Lewis, An Examination of the Johannesburg Native Revenue Act as at 30 June 1969 (Johannesburg: Johannesburg City Council, Non-European Affairs Department, 1970), p.1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> According to the West Rand Bantu Administration Board there were 668,335 people in Soweto in March 1977. These figures are however regarded as conservative given the fact that they exclude 38,000 hostel-dwellers and an



inestimable number of township-dwellers considered as "illegals" in the urban area under the influx control laws. See Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg) 19 February 1978.

<sup>12</sup> Edelstein, ibid, p. 52.

<sup>13</sup> The relationship between politics, resources and urban poverty is also explored in Akim Mabogunge, Urbanization in Nigeria (London: Oxford University Press); Pauline Baker Urbanization and Political Change: The Politics of Lagos (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Joan Nelson, Urban Poverty and Instability in Developing Nations (Cambridge: Harvard University, Center for International Affairs, Occasional Paper, No. 22, 1969); Wayne Cornelius, Politics and the Migrant Poor in Mexico City (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975).

<sup>14</sup> On this point see W.B. Schwab, The Political and Social Organization of an Urban African Community. Doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1952.

<sup>15</sup> On the phenomenon of "subsistence urbanization" see Gerald Breese, Urbanization in Newly-Developing Countries (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966).

<sup>16</sup> There is an enormous, often conflicting, literature on the so-called "radical urban poor" and the general relationship between urbanization and political instability. See, inter alia, S. Tangri, "Urbanization, Political Stability and Economic Growth," in R. Turner (ed.), India's

Urban Future (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962): E. Weismann, "The Urban Crisis in the World," Urban Affairs Quarterly, No. 1. 1965 : P. Hauser, "The Social, Economic and Technological Problems of Rapid Urbanization," in B.F. Hoselitz and W.E. Moore (eds.), Industrialization and Society (The Hague: UNESCO, 1963): G. Soares and R.L. Hamblin, "Socio-Economic Variables and Voting for the Radical Left, Chile 1952," American Political Science Review, December 1967: Mancur Olson, "Economic Growth as a Destabilizing Force," Journal of Economic History, December 1963: E. Wood, "The Implications of Migrant Labor for Urban Social Systems in Africa," Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, 8 (1) 1968: S. Comhaire-Sylvain and J.L.L. Comhaire-Sylvain, "Problems Relating to Urbanization: Formation of African Urban Problems," in F. Lorimer and M. Karp (eds.), Population in Africa, (Boston: Boston University Press, 1960): P. de Briey, "Urban Agglomerations and the Modernization of Developing States," Civilisations, No. 16, 1966: P. Hauser, "World and Asian Urbanization in Relation to Economic Development and Social Change," in P. Hauser (ed), Urbanization in Asia and the Far East (Calcutta: UNESCO, 1957): P. Hauser, "On the Impact of Urbanism on Social Organizations, Human Nature and Political Order," Confluence. No. 7, 1958: A. Segal, "The Problem of the Urban Unemployed," Africa Report, 10(4) 1965: T. Singh, "Problems of Integrating Urban, Rural and Industrial Development," in R. Turner, ibid: G.D. Jenkins, "Urban Violence in Africa," American Behavioral

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<sup>17</sup> Some theorists believe that the migrant is highly susceptible to politicization in the course of cityward movement, others that the urban environment itself exercises the force of politicization. On these issues see; Karl Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," American Political Science Review, 55 (3) 1961: Gino Germani,

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<sup>18</sup> The Star, 1st December 1977.

<sup>19</sup> On these pressures see M. Danton, "Tribal Headmen in Freetown," Journal of African Administration, No. 6, 1954:

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<sup>20</sup> Edelstein, ibid, p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> On this point see Richard Sandbrook, "The Working Class in the Future of the Third World," World Politics April 1973.

<sup>22</sup> See D. Dutterworth, "Grassroots Political Organization in Cuba: The Case of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution," in Wayne Cornelius and Felicity M. Trueblood, (eds.), Anthropological Perspectives on Latin American Urbanization (Beverly Hills: Sage, Latin American Urban Research, No. 4, 1974).

<sup>23</sup> T. Lee, "Urban Neighborhood as a Socio-Spatial Scheme," Human Relations, 21, 1968.

<sup>24</sup> A.H. Barton, Communities in Disaster: A Sociological Analysis of Collective Stress Situations (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1970); R.D. Putnam, "Political Attitudes and

the Local Community", American Political Science Review 60 (3) 1966.

<sup>25</sup> T.M. Lutz, Some Aspects of Community Organization and Activity in the Squatter Settlements of Panama City (Unpublished paper, Georgetown University, 1967); L. R. Peattie, The View From the Barrio (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1967).

<sup>26</sup> On this point see Morris Janowitz, The Community Press in an Urban Setting (Glencoe: Free Press, 1952).

<sup>27</sup> See William Mangin, "Latin American Squatter Settlements: A Problem and a Solution," Latin American Review, 2 (3) 1967.

<sup>28</sup> On the relationship between inter-community movement and political mobilization, see, inter alia, R.D. MacKenzie, "The Neighborhood," in R.K. Yin (ed.), The City in the Seventies (Itaska, Illinois Press, 1972); B.R. Roberts, Organizing Strangers: Poor Families in Guatemala City (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973); H.V. Savitch, "Powerlessness in an Urban Ghetto," Polity, 5 (1) 1972.

<sup>29</sup> Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg) 28 April 1977.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 31 May 1979.

<sup>31</sup> The Star, 19 May 1978.

<sup>32</sup> Rand Daily Mail, 9 May 1977.

<sup>33</sup> Rand Daily Mail, 17 August 1977, The Star, 7 September 1977.

<sup>34</sup> Rand Daily Mail, 17 August 1977.

<sup>35</sup> The Star, 4 July 1977, 22 August 1977, 7 September 1977

<sup>36</sup> On the so-called "culture of poverty" thesis, see Oscar Lewis, Five Families: Studies in the Culture of Poverty (New York: Basic Books, 1959); Oscar Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty," Scientific American, Vol 215, 1966; Oscar Lewis, La Vida (New York: Vantage Books, 1968); Oscar Lewis, The Children of Sanchez (New York: Random House, 1961); Charles Valentine, Culture and Poverty (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1968); Elizabeth Leacock (ed.), The Culture of Poverty: A Critique (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971).



## CHAPTER 11

### SOWETO'S POLITICAL CULTURE: TOWARDS REVOLUTION?

#### I POLITICAL CULTURE AND TOWNSHIP POLITICS

Political culture, loosely defined as the subjectivities brought to political behaviour, is in itself insufficient to explain politics.<sup>1</sup> This is because the link between political consciousness and action is always mediated by leadership and organizational factors, the specific nature of situations and, in the last analysis, by social structures. At the same time, the objective features of political life only have meaning to the extent that they are filtered through political culture. This is no less the case in contemporary South Africa where it is impossible to speculate intelligently about the present and future political order without some understanding of the individual and collective psychologies brought to politics by various actors, particularly blacks in the volatile segregated urban communities. Forty years ago it was already being pointed out that interpreting South African politics is heavily preconditioned upon some understanding of how blacks adjust psychologically to domination in the color caste conditions of local society.<sup>2</sup> Today, as the system becomes polarized progressively along racial lines, it is probably even more critical to know how blacks integrate themselves in the face of conflicting identity group pressures in such township communities as Langa, New Brighton, and possibly most important of all, Soweto.<sup>3</sup> Both the rate and form of political change in the Republic are tied intimately to black perceptions of political illegitimacy in these areas, and in evaluating their capacity to initiate and sustain remedial political

action it is important to know whether their inhabitants have or have not developed the complex of characteristics associated with structured social inequality and extended privation.<sup>4</sup> Since white domination is also maintained through allusions to technological and educational superiority reasonably independent of the brute exercise of coercive power, it is equally important to consider the defences developed by blacks against the injection of compliance-oriented ideologies into the collective consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

## II EVALUATING TOWNSHIP POLITICAL STRUCTURE: THE CONSTRAINTS

Various resources can be drawn upon in building models of urban black political culture. These include the speeches and writings of past and present black leaders, the biographies and autobiographies of a variety of 'non-political' figures, and a number of empirical surveys conducted by individual academics and market research organizations in recent years.<sup>6</sup> It is however necessary to emphasize at the outset that still very little is known about how South African blacks perceive politics, about their hopes, grievances and aspirations. In 1957 there existed "a serious shortage of scientifically sound literature" on these subjects, and two decades later another observer notes that "more wide-spread and regular surveys of what Africans think are required in order to answer the more important (political) questions."<sup>7</sup> Virtually nothing has been done to test concepts of relative deprivation among the black group, politically-important correlations between cognitions and length of urban residence remain to be drawn, and very little in the way of specific information on the psychologies informing urban riots and demonstrations has been collated.

What little is known about political culture in areas such as Soweto is also far from reliable in a fashion reflecting the complex

methodological problems facing survey research in Africa in general, and a variety of problems associated with this type of work in South Africa in particular.<sup>8</sup> In contemporary South Africa, research on black political subjectivities often suffers from severe culture distortion because most of it is undertaken by whites with or without black administrative assistance. Government antipathy towards black social scientists as well as the fact that it is whites who have the greatest need to know what blacks are thinking fuels this situation. Cross-racial communication in South Africa is also infrequent, very heavily ritualized and ridden with tension and suspicion. This makes it difficult to achieve much frankness or spontaneity in interview situations, or to recruit black respondents for testing except under artificial or selective conditions. Finally, research is intruded upon by the authoritarianism of the polity under which interviewees have for decades been denied genuine political expression. Today it is extremely difficult to distinguish blacks with few political opinions from the articulate and more mobilized element who are reluctant to express their feelings on the more controversial and sensitive issues. Survey work within the context of domination is apt to produce a very high lie factor.

Problems of this magnitude are at least partially resistant to methodological compensation so that what is presently known about political culture in Soweto or other black townships is certainly more ambiguous and ultimately less precise than the standards set forth by systematic social analysis.<sup>9</sup> It is important to delineate the perceived political world in the townships in order to come to grips with the major issues of contemporary South African politics: but in doing so it is equally important to treat the emerging parameters in a broadly cautious manner.

### III SOWETO'S POLITICAL CULTURE: CENTRAL FEATURES

Research into South African urban black political cognitions coheres around a number of points which can be taken in conjunction to define the contours of township political culture.

In the initial instance, the most contemporary analyses recognize the existence in Soweto (and other townships) of a variety of interpenetrating forces at work to produce a trans-ethnic political culture, both along lines dictated by conventional modernization and in forms reflecting the more parochial and peculiar input of the South African political system. In Soweto, the tendency of urbanization to homogenize social consciousness by submitting disparate individuals to common values, experiences and organizational settings is, naturally enough, mediated by a complex of personality, residential, generational and experiential factors. In the townships there is no direct trade-off between, for example, ethnic identity and length of urban residence. For reasons rooted in human communication even the most long-standing Sowetons prefer to socialize within linguistic boundaries, and among this group there are a variety of inhibitions on marriage across ethnic lines, particularly on the part of older generations.<sup>10</sup> In Soweto there is also evidence supporting the notion that ethnicity, far from declining in the urban setting, can assume new, resilient and functionally adaptive forms.<sup>11</sup> Yet most modern research on the townships clearly points to ethnically-determined social boundaries as being of rapidly declining importance for the majority of intra-communal transactions. Philip Mayer, for example, states that "ethnic boundary maintenance is no longer a matter of supreme concern" for Johannesburg blacks, even while conceding the existence of encapsulated pockets of rural psychology in the black urban areas.<sup>12</sup> Ethnicity, he adds, "may have been grossly over-estimated as

a specific, consistent and regular political factor in the past".<sup>13</sup> Today, Sowetons are on the whole deeply apologetic when found to be using ethnic criteria in defining social relations, and there are very few, especially among the young, who value 'tribal' affiliations so highly as to support their maintenance through the medium of law.<sup>14</sup>

Pressures towards cultural uniformity are crystallized and politicized by racial structures and by the boundedness and endemic insecurity of township existence. No black in South Africa, irrespective of ethnic background, can be mobile beyond the rigid race-determined strata inbuilt in the polity, and this tends to encourage race rather than ethnicity as the most emotive focus for identities, social organization and political opposition in relations between Soweto and the wider white-dominated system. Apartheid is, ironically, indiscriminate in spreading humiliation through the black population each and every of whose individual members is subject to inescapable boundaries of low status independent of culture or class. This has the enormous socio-political consequence of compacting communities such as Soweto back into themselves, and of blunting intra-communal conflict in a fashion qualitatively different from most other African urban settings.<sup>15</sup> Cultural and legislative constraints on inter-racial communication across township boundaries, as well as the insecurity bred of the historic refusal of the authorities to recognize Soweto as anything but a transient labor concentration reinforces this process with its end result of a powerful transethnic 'we-feekubg' conducive to the ready internalization of dominant community norms.

Common and popular understandings of politics in Soweto are also however influenced deeply by the fact that the local population lives in what must rank as one of the most intensely regulated environments in

the world. Short of the most intimate and mundane of transactions, social acts in Soweto are deeply embedded in a complex network of mutually reinforcing and restrictive laws, one which has become noticeably more dense and discriminatory with the drift of the system into increased authoritarianism over the last thirty years. The result today is that relative to members of the white elite, black perceptions of the division between the public and private realm of existence is far less distinct.<sup>16</sup> As a number of commentators have noted, the dividing line between individual and collective interests tends to obscurity in urban black perceptions, and this in its turn favors politicization both at the individual and aggregate level.<sup>17</sup> There are, as a result, strong political overtones to even the most casual statements of urban blacks, though less so on the part of women who are arguably somewhat insulated from political influences through their domestic roles.<sup>18</sup>

Maintaining the caste system depends at least in part on blacks internalizing ideologies and racial mythologies whose purpose it is to induce acceptance of low status on the social ladder. The daily experience of race relations under conditions of domination, and more explicit instruments such as 'bantu education' assist this process with all its negative implications for collective mobilization and the development of individual feelings of authenticity. Yet, in practice many Sowetons identify the system as the ultimate arbiter of their existence, and precisely because it is so overwhelming in its dominance, cognitions of blame for low status are deflected from the person or black grouping to the basic social structures.<sup>19</sup> In the harshly stratified South African context, upwardly mobile black individuals also cannot raise their broad social status in the absence of improvements in the status of the black community as a whole. This tends

to promote a perception of social futures in collective rather than individual terms, a strong collective problem solving ethic and a high estimation of the notion of community service, particularly among the small but socially influential township middle class.<sup>20</sup>

Needless to say, these orientations encourage resistance to the psychologically demeaning onslaught of popular racial ideology.

There is in fact much in the reactions of Sowetons and other urban blacks suggesting that they have not on the whole become a subject people surrendering to what Hoyt Alverson has termed "the vicissitudes and indignities of prejudicial denigration and social, political and economic discrimination".<sup>21</sup> Neuroses are widespread in the urban black communities and there is a distinctive tendency to retreat into fantasy in the face of apartheid perfectly consistent with the literature on social subjection and personal psychological dysfunction.<sup>22</sup> Yet white claims to technological and educational superiority are widely seen as continuous with the exercise of racial power, particularly by the young and more highly educated who are inclined to accurately explain inter-racial differentials in skills as a consequence rather than cause of racial inequality. There is in the townships a widespread conviction, possibly even more pervasive than that found among blacks in the United States, that it is the structural shackling of blacks rather than endogenous personality deficiencies which inhibits their performing authentic and contributory social and political roles.<sup>23</sup> American blacks are widely admired by Sowetons on the basis of their struggle for racial equality, particularly by adherents to black consciousness doctrines.<sup>24</sup> This group tends to be composed of individuals attributing a high value to their blackness as a reaction to their exceptional sensitivity to the closed nature of the system.<sup>25</sup> Yet most blacks display a preference for

being black despite the discriminatory features of local society.<sup>26</sup>

On this basis there are grounds for tentatively believing that the psychological environment in areas such as Soweto is not necessarily congruent with the types of degraded collectivities described by Frantz Fanon or the culture of poverty thesis.<sup>27</sup> More systematic evidence is however required to back this hypothesis with a reasonable degree of conclusiveness. What has already been made clear in repeated surveys is that there are very few township-dwellers who are happy, secure or confident. Profound bitterness and discontent with racial discrimination is widely evidenced, and racial stereotyping similar to that found in white society is a marked feature of the political culture. In a study conducted in the early sixties, three-quarters of the urban black sample cited negative incidents involving whites when asked to describe situations having an important bearing on their lives, and three respondents cited race relations as poor for every one regarding them as satisfactory.<sup>28</sup> This pattern is replicated in the so-called Markinor surveys conducted in the wake of the 1976 riots. The 1977 survey in the series emphasizes that "awareness of underlying injustice and discrimination or racial inequity or hatred is still very strong", and in contrast to many whites who see the racial situation as improving, most blacks see it deteriorating to new levels. Thus, whereas 9 percent saw race relations as worsening in the 1974 study, 69 percent concurred with this view in the comparable 1977 survey. Similarly, while 77 percent of urban blacks believed race relations to be "the same" in 1976, only 23 percent agreed with this view two years later.<sup>29</sup>

It is however important to make certain subtle qualifications within this framework of accumulating racial hostility. In the first



place, apartheid is seen by many blacks as a purely Afrikaner creation, and relative to English members of the white elite, Afrikaners are loaded with the most negative of social qualities including cruelty, prejudice and domination.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, racial resentments are more stereotypic among lowly educated urban blacks in what seems to be a reaction to the belief that white feelings are profoundly prejudicial. "Whites hate blacks" or "whites are killing blacks" are characteristic responses to questions designed to tap feelings about race relations at low educational levels. Moving up the educational ladder however, negative feelings tend to turn more on the specific restraints on black upward mobility, and among the Soweton bourgeoisie race hostilities arise out of a lethal mixture of perceived constraints of this nature plus hostility towards a system undercutting black claims to status even within the narrow confines of their own communities. This group sees itself as having absorbed European values at a considerable expenditure of social resources, yet still facing double jeopardy in its claims to recognition at every turn. On the one hand it is rejected by white society, on the other it is forced by white society into becoming an undifferentiated segment of the black common mass. It is out of these ingredients that there emerges what are often the strongest feelings of racial hostility and political militancy in the township environment.

South African politics is synonymous with race politics so that negative feelings on race relations inevitably carry over to color aversions to the political system. According to Lawrence Schlemmer's recent study, blacks are "deeply discontented, frustrated, view dominant institutions with basic suspicion and experience an acute sense of pariah status".<sup>31</sup> According to him, between fifty and sixty percent of urban blacks experience discontent as some form of

relative deprivation, there are "almost no Africans at all who are willing to defend the system or argue its virtues", and a substantial majority of the rank and file are "utterly intractable in their emotional and intellectual rejection of any of the manifold assumptions upon which attempts to justify the system of inequality or aspects of it may rest".<sup>32</sup> Political authority in Soweto is widely distrusted, the more politicized township inhabitants see government as intractable and unresponsive in relation to their claims, and while the second generation hypothesis has not been confirmed systematically, the 1976 disturbances seem to indicate that the young, more educated and urban-born Soweton is more fundamentally dissatisfied with the present political system than any other element in the community.<sup>33</sup>

It is however once again important to disaggregate feelings of dissatisfaction subject to the common denominator that all blacks have an interest in the removal of racial discrimination. The influx control laws, for example, have been a long-standing source of grievance in the black community because they inhibit labor mobility and normal familial interaction.<sup>34</sup> In the study conducted by Melvin Edelstein, the pass system emerges as the most important source of discontent among young urban blacks after the absence of political rights, and in the 1977 Markinor survey 21 percent of the sample list "no human rights, no freedom of speech or movement, oppression and influx control" as among the primary problems confronting the township community.<sup>35</sup> Economic discrimination also figures highly in the demand hierarchy of Sowetons, and much as in other poverty habitats where land titles are regarded as vital for raising credit and assuring some sort of inheritance for future generations, the group areas legislation denying landownership to urban blacks is a major source of insecurity.<sup>36</sup> Mayer has suggested that many Sowetons

internalize the belief that success depends on individual hard work and are prepared to accept economic inequalities even while conceding their racial basis.<sup>37</sup> Yet better job prospects have always been rated very highly by non-professional blacks, (particularly in times of economic constriction), and the more entrepreneurial-minded have long complained of the advantages offered their white counterparts in the market.<sup>38</sup> As the 1976 riots indicate, 'bantu education' is a major source of frustration with many blacks regarding the system as a means to perpetuate their social inferiority.<sup>39</sup> This at least in part reflects the importance attached by blacks to education as a means of intellectual and material improvement.<sup>40</sup> 'Petty' apartheid (from the white perspective) is also regarded as far from trivial when viewed through the eyes of its black subjects.<sup>41</sup>

Sowetons, finally, tend to have very definite opinions on alternatives to the present system, most of which involve understandably enough, dismantling the structures of racial inequality and the equalization of social treatment. From all available evidence, Sowetons continue to prefer capitalist to socialist forms of organization, particularly the emergent bourgeoisie which defines the present order as discriminatory rather than exploitative.<sup>42</sup> Urban blacks in this category are those who would experience the greatest access to rewards were an indiscriminatory capitalist system to be instituted, and they seem to resent the system only because it is unfairly capitalist in its workings. There is at the same time very little support for a qualified franchise based on educational criteria - although earlier studies detected strong support for this particular political option - and with the possible exception of Kwazulu's Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, 'homeland' leaders or 'independence' are not regarded as positive contributions to the township lot.<sup>43</sup> In a

recent survey three-quarters of the sample of urban blacks emphatically rejected apartheid and called for majority rule.<sup>44</sup> (See Table 1 below.) Although Soweto's leaders have not ruled out some sort of federal solution to South Africa's problems, (provided it involves genuine power-sharing on a non-racial basis), this tends to lend weight to the historic demand for a majoritarian democracy in a unified South Africa as an overwhelming black first preference.<sup>45</sup>

TABLE 1: DISCONTENT AMONG URBAN BLACKS

1.	No discontent manifest . . . . .	6%	
2.	Discontent without characteristics below . . . . .	15%	
3.	Discontent with marked bitterness but nothing else . . . . .	15%	
4.	Emphatic rejection of Apartheid/expressed preference for majority rule . . . . .	74%	
5.	Aggressive hostility manifest but unfocused . . . . .	5%	
6.	Political action oriented - unspecified . . . . .	17%	
7.	Political action oriented - non-confrontationist or non-violent . . . . .	17%	
8.	Political action oriented - violent . . . . .	2%	36%

Ref: L. Schlemmer. "Political Adaption and Reaction Among Urban Africans in South Africa," *Social Dynamics*. 2 (June 1976) p.14.

#### IV POLITICAL CULTURE AND REVOLUTION

On the basis of the above profile there seem good reasons for believing that South Africa is entering, (or has in fact entered), an incipient revolutionary situation. Apparently growing political consciousness in the townships, the tendency of blacks to subordinate ethnic differences to the imperatives of racial solidarity,

emerging polarities between the dominant and subordinate race groups, and profound black discontent at discrimination in all its manifestations - all suggest the existence in areas such as Soweto of a political culture proximate to the subjective preconditions of revolution.

There is at the same time quite a substantial body of evidence running counter to the apocalyptic school of thought, which foresees political evolution as more likely than revolution, and which should be taken into consideration in any balanced exploration of township political culture. The strongest supporters of this view are, naturally enough, members of the white elite itself, most of whom tend to grossly understate the intensity of discontent among urban blacks, either for reasons of psychological comfort or because of the sheer lack of communication between the races. Yet interestingly enough, the view that the townships are not yet psychologically ripe for revolution is also subscribed to by many adherents of black consciousness. Were this not the case, there would assumedly be no need for a movement whose specific purpose is to intellectually liberate blacks or, (to use the fashionable term), 'conscientize' them as a prerequisite to political action.<sup>46</sup>

Revolutions, in the first place, always arise out of the polarization of groups, (be they races, classes or some combination of the two), yet in South Africa, it can be argued, the critical subjective 'gap' between the races is still far from crystallized. It is difficult to specify the threshold of polarization beyond which civil warfare become inevitable in any given historic situation, yet according to a recent survey, urban blacks remain highly tolerant of whites, and certainly moreso than whites are of blacks either in South Africa or many Western European countries.<sup>47</sup> Racial antagonism, it seems, has

also failed to carry over from the collective to the individual realm in many cases, and while the growth of black consciousness has reduced organized group contacts between the races, personal relations between black and white are often remarkably sound, if heavily formalized. Neither middle class blacks nor the township youth reject increased social contact with whites, although the passage of the years has to some incalculable degree enlarged the pockets of racial militancy within both these groupings.<sup>48</sup> While the growth of black consciousness has also eroded the distinction between English and Afrikaner in black perceptions, many urban blacks still rate English whites very highly among ethnic groups, in some cases even more highly than other black ethnic formations.<sup>49</sup>

It is also important that there are few indications of blacks favoring a reversal of social roles in the form of a black dominated system. In Leo Kuper's classic study, less than 20 percent of the sample desired a radical social reorganization along these lines, and in Melvin Edelstein's more recent work on Soweto high school students over 70 percent evinced support for a multi-racial system as the ideal model for future South African society.<sup>50</sup> Mayer's recent work also indicates a resilient spirit of racial tolerance in the townships in which, he asserts, "black identification in the aggressive sense has not yet become a popular idea."<sup>51</sup> There is certainly a constituency in the townships for the idea of "driving the whites into the sea", (especially among the young), yet one cannot automatically assume that these notions will endure or intensify given the role of maturation in the progressive reshaping of political ideals.<sup>52</sup>

Revolutions occur in proportion to the breakdown of popular hopes of reform, and once again there is reason to believe that the existence of a revolutionary ethos in areas such as Soweto is not quite

clear cut. There are undoubtedly many Sowetons who are increasingly pessimistic about the future, certainly more so than members of the Indian and Colored subject groups in the process of being granted reserve elite status in terms of prime minister Botha's 'total strategy'.<sup>53</sup> Since the 1976 riots the feeling among urban blacks that the political situation is degenerating into racial violence has also escalated. Yet, Schlemmer's survey suggests that a considerable proportion of the township community continues to place their hopes in value gains over time, and the perception that circumstances are worsening is still roughly balanced.<sup>54</sup> (See Table 2 below.) The segregation of blacks and the relative lack of inter-racial transactions outside the workplace also tends to dilute feelings of relative deprivation. As Schlemmer notes, while "perceptions of aspirational relative deprivation. . . are present among a majority . . . perceptions of relative deprivation specifically focussed on the formally entrenched political and economic privileges of whites may be a somewhat weaker element in the political consciousness of Africans."<sup>55</sup> On the whole, the rhetoric of change associated with the Botha administration tends to encourage reformist-type mentalities in circumstances where erosion of black confidence in the ability of the system to rectify itself in terms of economic justice and equality tends to be exceptionally slow.<sup>56</sup>

TABLE 2: URBAN BLACK PERCEPTIONS OF SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION

No Information . . . . .	3%
Circumstances improving . . . . .	50%
Uncertain/ambivalent . . . . .	2%
Circumstances constant or deteriorating . . . . .	45%
	<u>100%</u>

Ref: 2 Schlemmer - "Political Adaption and Reaction Among Urban Africans in South Africa" Social Dynamics 2 (June 1976) p.11.

In most deprived communities individuals are forced to depress political concerns in favor of the material imperatives associated with daily survival, and in Soweto political discontent is heavily mediated by instrumental demand-making.<sup>57</sup> In the Schlemmer study, 80 percent of the sample identified the simple lack of money as their 'main problem', and in the Markinor surveys a distinctive economism of perception is also evident.<sup>58</sup> (See Table 3 below.) In the somewhat earlier Brett and Morse study only 22 out of 150 respondents saw the existence of a peaceful and democratic government in South Africa as important in relation to ninety one wanting better educational facilities and general improvements in black living standards.<sup>59</sup> Even in the post-1976 period many Sowetons continue to rank security of land tenure over and above the immediate acquisition of political rights.<sup>60</sup> It is, of course, quite conceivable that the majority of instrumental demands require preceding political change, yet the available evidence could also be interpreted to mean that many urban blacks would at least in the short-run settle for a series of socio-economic rewards, if only because the road to political liberation is so tortuous and difficult. This means that the present order could well purchase its survival into the foreseeable future provided it can gear itself to the 'non-political' discontents of its black population. The extension of the right of land ownership to urban blacks and improved township services and personal incomes could all conceivably work in this direction.



TABLE 3: URBAN BLACK PERCEPTION OF 'MAIN PROBLEMS'

- lack of money . . . . .	80%
- transport problems . . . . .	45%
- accommodation/housing problems . . . . .	41%
- hostility, discrimination and punitive legislation on the part of whites or Government . . . . .	41%
- employment opportunity and conditions . . . . .	40%
- access to and quality of education . . . . .	32%
- Influx Control laws (pass laws) . . . . .	31%
- crime in the townships . . . . .	26%

(other problems were mentioned by less than 20% of respondents).

Ref: 2 Schlemmer - 'Political Adaption and Reaction Among Urban Africans in South Africa'. Social Dynamics 2  
(June 76) p.11.

The quintessence of revolution is the use of violence against the state, yet as so much in Soweto, feelings concerning violence as a means of political change are deeply ambiguous. American blacks are admired for their militancy in the face of racial repression, and what are to whites acts of terrorism are seen by most blacks as events on the road to liberation.<sup>61</sup> Violence also occurs with considerable frequency as a theme in black interpretations of social futures.<sup>62</sup> Yet many blacks regarding violence as inevitable do not necessarily regard it as desirable, and the tradition of passive resistance seems far from dead. In Glenys Lobban's work, for example, a full third of the sample continue to place their faith in some form of negotiation with the white authorities, although among 'militants' there was strong support for accompanying claims with pressure.<sup>63</sup> (See Table 4 below.) In practice, none of contemporary Soweto's community influentials reject the

notion of conditional dialogue with government, not only because to do so is to run the risk of prosecution under the security laws, but, more pointedly, because it is widely felt that blacks have very few alternative options in the face of the enormous preponderance of force in favor of the dominant elite.<sup>64</sup>

TABLE 4: 'MILITANT' URBAN BLACK PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL ALTERNATIVES

Item	"Militant" alternative	Scale position of item	Percent selecting
1.	Almost all situations where we see the problem of prejudice and discrimination in South Africa simply cannot be handled without organized pressure and group action from the African.	68,9	2
2.	The best way to overcome discrimination is through pressure and social action	48,9	2
3.	Relying on Whites to form committees to solve the Africans' problems is no good. Talking and understanding among Whites without constant protest and pressure from the Africans will never solve South Africa's colour problem.	64,4	2
4.	The only way that Africans will gain their rights is by constant protest and pressure.	84,4	4
5.	The discrimination and prejudice found in South Africa affects every African. The only way to solve the problem is for Africans to organize together and demand rights for all Africans.	93,3	8,5
6.	Only if Africans stand together and work as a group can anything really be done about the racial problem in South Africa.	80,0	6,5
7.	Whites are so opposed to Africans getting their rights that it would be practically impossible to impose the race situation in South Africa peacefully.	68,9	6,5
8.	The racial situation in South Africa may be very complex but with enough money and effort, it is possible to get rid of racial discrimination and prejudice.	77,7	5
9.	Many Africans who don't do well in life do have training, but the opportunities go always to Whites.	86,7	8,5

Ref: Glenys Lobban - "Self-Attitudes of Urban Africans" in Stanley J. Morse and Christopher Orpen (eds) Contemporary South Africa: Social-Psychological Perspectives (Cape Town, Juta, 1975) p.175.

The failure of the 1976 riots to mushroom out to challenge apartheid seriously indicates the present skewing of power between black and white, and it also suggests that in the last analysis the average Soweton may not yet have reached the level of political self-confidence to believe the system can be confronted effectively. The events of the year raised political consciousness in the townships many of whose previously unpoliticized inhabitants were profoundly impressed by the courage of the local student population.<sup>65</sup> Yet in an atmosphere where fear of arrest and of the police is pervasive, a popular uprising was inhibited from the start, and the authorities were able to cream off successive layers of black leadership both during and after the disturbances.<sup>66</sup> In the past four years, rampant inflation and black unemployment has also heightened black economic dependency on the system to compound feelings of political inefficacy, except on the margins of the community particularly among the youth. It is very significant that while 1979-80 has seen many areas of South Africa rocket by student and labor strikes analogous to those of Soweto three years previously, the black townships of Johannesburg have remained noticeably quiescent.<sup>67</sup> This suggests that in the mainstream of their political culture the legacy of decades of intense social control is still what one observer described years ago as "leaden resignation", tinged on its edges with an unwilling acceptance of racial discrimination.<sup>68</sup>

#### V CONCLUSION: THE DYNAMICS OF CHANGE

Structures do not necessarily alter congruent with cultures, yet cultures are always dynamic to differing degrees, in the process generating new stimuli for political behavior. In South Africa, as anywhere else, governmental performance is a critical variable in the mechanics of cultural change, and in areas such as Soweto the rate and

fashion of Nationalist responses to township demands is an important shaping factor in the local political culture. At this stage it is not at all self-evident that 'total strategy' will succeed in coopting Soweto's middle class into the ruling political alliance.<sup>69</sup> Yet should the Botha government manage to exploit the distinct if often:obscure class cleavages in the townships to mesh the interests of the black elite with those of the dominant racial bloc, it will, at one fell stroke, undermine the relative coherency of political values in these areas, and remove a major mechanism for their articulation. Even should attempts to convert the dynamics of caste into those of class fail because of structural or cultural constraints, positive sanctions geared to the more immediate of black instrumental demands are likely to decelerate the development of a revolutionary political consciousness, and may even work to build specific if not diffuse system supports. It is important not to ignore the difficulties attached to implementing even a limited policy of black welfare in the race-saturated environment of South Africa. Nor may welfare be adequate to legitimize the system in black perceptions at this late historic stage, no matter how broad its dimensions. Yet, eliminating 'petty apartheid', institutionalizing the principle of equal opportunity, modulating influx control and providing urban blacks with security of land tenure could take some of the edge off black resentment, particularly if coupled with some political formula granting blacks access to central decision-making institutions.<sup>70</sup>

The ability of 'homeland' actors to penetrate the subjective fabric of the townships is also an important determinant of change in the way Sowetons respond to the political world. There are good grounds for believing that the homeland leaders are a declining political force in South Africa's rapidly de-ethnicizing urban black communities. In

general, with the important exception of migrant labor, individuals such as chiefs Mangope and Matanzima, (of Bophuthatswana and Transkei respectively), have a very limited ability to influence political feelings in the metropolitan areas. Yet homeland leaders of the stature of Kwazulu's chief, Gatsha Buthelezi, can command considerable support in the townships, largely but by no means exclusively built upon an ethnic base.<sup>71</sup> Buthelezi himself is adept at manipulating the symbols of black liberation, yet his Inkatha organization is predominantly Zulu, and should it commit itself to actively participating in Soweto's community politics, (as it seems in the process of doing), there is a very real danger of re-ethnicization, to the satisfaction of the white elite, but ultimately injurious to black solidarity.

Political cognitions in Soweto are, thirdly, influenced by developments in the states bordering the Republic, in Mozambique and Zimbabwe in particular. Today, many township blacks take their cues from the success experienced by the liberation movements in these adjacent areas, and both Frelimo and the Patriotic Front have come to symbolize the value of confrontative-type politics. The structural conditions for revolution in South Africa are profoundly different given its relatively higher level of industrialization and the sophisticated technologies of control at the disposal of the white elite. At the same time, events in Zimbabwe and Mozambique are a source of inspiration and spiritual comfort to the average, reasonably-informed Soweton.

Finally, group consciousness can compensate for low socio-economic status to induce political participation, and black consciousness doctrines are, with their revitalizing thrust, an important element in the development of new forms of political culture in Soweto and South Africa's other racially-bounded black areas. The original torchbearers

of these doctrines, the South African Student Movement, the South African Students Organization and the Black Peoples Convention, have all been repressed, while black consciousness itself has been condemned as an essentially elitist approach to liberation. Yet new movements have emerged to fill the political vacuum created by the October 1977 bannings, some of which, such as the Azanian Peoples Organization, are clearly intent upon popularizing black consciousness among the township working class. Today, black consciousness is internalized by many Sowetons, especially those with a relatively long exposure to urban life and relatively high levels of education. Black conscious individuals, so it seems, are far less tolerant of ethnic politics than any other of Soweto's inhabitants, more participant within racial boundaries, less inclined to transact across these divisions, less deferential to authority, more inclined to organizational activity, and more sympathetic to protest-type political action though not necessarily to the use of violence.<sup>72</sup>

Given the emphasis placed by black consciousness on "regroupment in the cause of liberation", the dissemination of its doctrines may ultimately mean racial polarity refined to the point where protest modes of political action emerge naturally out of township political culture as the only accepted means of political expression.<sup>73</sup> At the same time however, Sowetons who are politically black conscious are not necessarily immune from the pervasive sense of political fear generally inhibiting the translation of cognitions into behaviour in the townships, nor does it seem that the number of individuals of this persuasion are more than a minority, if a growing and substantial one at that.<sup>74</sup> This means that transformations in political culture arising from black consciousness depend on their proponents capturing leadership and opinion-forming positions in the township community, and subsequently

filtering their convictions into the body politic. With inroads being made into Soweto politics by Inkatha, and with government sanctions hovering constantly over the black consciousness movement, this occurrence is far from self-evident. In the final analysis, the future of black consciousness as a mobilizing doctrine may depend, as so much else in South African politics, on government capacity to shore up the massive cracks in the foundations of race relations and build black support for the political system. The lessons of history suggest that the dominant elite will prove unequal to this task. If history is then to repeat itself, the ideals of black consciousness could conceivably become broadly congruent with the political culture of the townships in the foreseeable future.



FOOTNOTES.

<sup>1</sup> This is in line with Sydney Verba's definition of political culture as "the subjective orientations brought to politics", or "the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols and values which define the situation in which political action takes place". Lucian Pye and Sydney Verba, eds., Political Culture and Political Development (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 513.

<sup>2</sup> I. D. Mac Crone, Race Attitudes in South Africa (London: Oxford University Press, 1937).

<sup>3</sup> Langa, along with Nyanga and Guguletu forms the black township complex of Cape Town; New Brighton denotes the black areas of Port Elizabeth. South-Western townships, popularly called Soweto, lies a few miles to the south of Johannesburg.

<sup>4</sup> These include so-called over-determination, cultural shame, dissociative reactions and feelings of self-hatred and personal inadequacy.

<sup>5</sup> On these issues see Lawrence Schlemmer, "Political Adaption and Reaction Among Urban Africans in South Africa," Social Dynamics, 2 (June 1976), 3-18; Philip Mason, Patterns of Dominance (London: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Down Second Avenue (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1971); Philip Mayer, Urban Africans and the Bantustans (Johannesburg:

South African Institute of Race Relations, 1972): M.T. Moerane, "The Aspirations of the Urban African," in South African Dialogue, ed. Nic Rhodie (Johannesburg: McGraw Hill, 1972), 335-42; Markinor, Socio-Political Barometer (Johannesburg, Markinor, 1977).

<sup>7</sup> N.J. Rhodie and H.J. Venter, Apartheid (Pretoria: HAUM Publishers, 1957), 6; Henry Lever, South African Society (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1978), 198.

<sup>8</sup> On the problems confronting survey work in Africa see Simon Biesheuvel, "Objectives and Methods of African Psychological Research," Journal of Social Psychology, 43 (1965), 355-64; Sybil Baran, "The Development and Validation of a Projective Test for Use Among Bantu-Speaking People," in Contemporary South Africa: Social-Psychological Perspectives, ed. Stanley J. Morse and Christopher Orpen (Cape Town: Juta, 1975), 13; A.A. Dubb, L. Melamed and N. Majodina, "African Attitudes in Towns: The Search for Precision," African Studies, 32 (2), 1973, 85-97.

<sup>9</sup> Among the techniques used to maximize precision in the measurement of African attitudes are future biographies, form-series tests, life histories, unstructured interviews, social distance scales, administered projective tests, Likert scales, and semantic differential tests. See Kurt Danziger, "The Psychological Future of an Oppressed Group," Social Forces, 42 (1963), 31-40; Gerald V. Grant, "The Urban-Rural Scale: A Socio-Cultural Measure of Individual Urbanization," in Morse and Orpen, Contemporary South Africa, 24-47; Mac Crone, Race Attitudes; M. Brandel-

Syrier, Reeftown Elite (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971); M. Edelstein, What Do Young Africans Think? (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1972); J. de Ridder, Personality of the Urban African in South Africa (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961); S. Jacobs, "Reactions to Minority Group Status by a Group of Urban Africans in South Africa" (unpublished honors dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1965); Dubb, Melamed and Majodina, "African Attitudes in Towns".

<sup>10</sup> Philip Mayer, "Class, Status and Ethnicity as Perceived by Johannesburg Africans," in Change in Contemporary South Africa, ed. Leonard Thompson and Jeffrey Butler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 152.

<sup>11</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, "Ethnicity and National Integration in West Africa," Cahier d'Etudes Africaines 1 (3) 1960. 129-39.

<sup>12</sup> "Class, Status and Ethnicity," 152.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>14</sup> Edelstein, What Do Young Africans Think?, 99.

<sup>15</sup> For a similar dynamic in the Zambian setting, see A. L. Epstein, Politics in an Urban African Community (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958).

<sup>16</sup> Danziger, "The Psychological Future of an Oppressed Group," reproduced in Morse and Orpen, Contemporary South Africa, 118.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 120

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 125; Leonard Bloom, "Self-Concept and Social Status in South Africa," in Morse and Orpen, Contemporary South Africa, 147-153; Leonard Bloom, A. R. de Crespigny and J. E. Spence, "An Interdisciplinary Study of Social, Moral and Political Attitudes of White and Non-White South African University Students," Journal of Social Psychology, 54 (1961), 3-12.

<sup>19</sup> Philip Frankel, "Status, Group Consciousness and Political Participation: Black Consciousness in Soweto" (paper presented at the workshop, "Labor, Townships and Patterns of Protest, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg., February 3-7, 1978), 6.

<sup>20</sup> The professional-managerial group in Soweto makes up just over 6 percent of the township population, while 79 percent of it is composed of semi-skilled or unskilled labor. Between these two groups is a petit bourgeoisie, most of whom are involved in the community's roughly one thousand five hundred small businesses. Edelstein, What Do Young Africans Think?, Table VIII.

<sup>21</sup> Hoyt Alveson, "Minority Group Autonomy and the Rejection of Dominant Group Racial Mythologies: the Zulu of South Africa," African Studies, 33 (1), 1974, 3.

<sup>22</sup> See N.C. Manganyi, Being Black in the World (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1973): A. Gregor, James MacPherson and D. Angus MacPherson, "Racial Reference and Ego Identity Among White and Bantu Children in the

Republic of South Africa," Genetic Psychology Monographs 73 (1966), 217-253.

<sup>23</sup> Glenys Lobban, "Self-Attitudes of Urban Africans," in Morse and Orpen, Contemporary South Africa, 176.

<sup>24</sup> Philip Mayer, "Class, Status and Ethnicity," 159; Philip Frankel, "Status, Group Consciousness and Political Participation," 7.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>26</sup> Edelstein, What Do Young Africans Think?, 96  
Lobban, "Self-Attitude of Urban Africans," 177.

<sup>27</sup> Frantz Fanon, Black Skins, White Masks (New York: Grove Press, 1967); Oscar Lewis, La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty (New York: Random, 1966). For a critique of the culture of poverty concept see E.B. Leacock, ed., The Culture of Poverty: A Critique (New York, 1971).

<sup>28</sup> E.A. Brett, African Attitudes: A Study of Social, Racial and Political Attitudes of Some Middle Class Africans (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1963).

<sup>29</sup> Lever, South African Society, 206; The Star (Johannesburg), May 25, 1977.

<sup>30</sup> Lever, South African Society, 194; Rand Daily Mail, (Johannesburg), October 27, 1972.

<sup>31</sup> "Political Adaption and Reaction," 9.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 12-15.

<sup>33</sup> Frankel, "Status, Group Consciousness and Political Participation," 9.

<sup>34</sup> On influx control see Philip Frankel, "The Politics of Passes: Control and Change in South Africa," Journal of Modern African Studies, 17 (July 1979), 199-217.

<sup>35</sup> What Do Young Africans Think?, 95: The Star (Johannesburg), May 25, 1977.

<sup>36</sup> On the importance of land tenure to poor people see Wayne Cornelius, Politics and the Migrant Poor in Mexico City (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975).

<sup>37</sup> "Class, Status and Ethnicity," 166.

<sup>38</sup> Edelstein, What Do Young Africans Think?, 95: E.A. Brett and Stanley J. Morse, "A Study of the Attitudes of Middle Class Africans," in Morse and Orpen, Contemporary South Africa, 157.

<sup>39</sup> Danziger, "The Psychological Future," 117.

<sup>40</sup> R.K. Muir and R. Turner, "The Africans Drive for Education in South Africa," Comparative Education, 9 (1965), 303-322.

<sup>41</sup> Mayer, "Class, Status and Ethnicity," 146.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 150: Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg), October 8, 1979.

<sup>43</sup> Rand Daily Mail, October 8, 1979. This report deals with the issue of Dutholezi's popularity.

<sup>44</sup> Schlemmer, "Political Adaption and Reaction", 14.

<sup>45</sup> On confederal and consociational models in South Africa, and black reactions to these proposals, see Philip Frankel, "Consensus, Consociation and Cooption in South African Politics," Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, in press.

<sup>46</sup> Among the important works on black consciousness see Bennie A. Khoapa, ed., Black Review, 1972 (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1973), and Gail M. Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

<sup>47</sup> Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg), October 8, 1979.

<sup>48</sup> Brett and Morse, "A Study of the Attitudes of Middle Class Africans," 159.

<sup>49</sup> Edelstein, What Do Young Africans Think?, 92; Lobban, "Self-Attitudes of Urban Africans," 172.

<sup>50</sup> Leo Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie: Race, Class and Politics in South Africa (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 180; Edelstein, What Do Young Africans Think?, 96.

<sup>51</sup> Urban Africans and the Bantustans (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1972), 8.

<sup>52</sup> Schlemmer, "Political Adaption and Reaction," 16.

<sup>53</sup> See Philip Frankel, "Race and Counter-Revolution: South Africa's 'Total Strategy'," Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, 18 (November 1980), 272-292.

<sup>54</sup> "Political Adaption and Reaction," 11.

55 Ibid., 16.

56 The Star, (Johannesburg), May 25, 1977.

57 On the relationship between daily survival and political action in poor urban communities, see Cornelius, Politics and the Migrant Poor.

58 "Political Adaption and Reaction," 11: Lever, South African Society, 200 et seq.

59 Quoted in Lever, South African Society, 202.

60 The World, (Johannesburg), April 3, 1977.

61 Lobban, "Self-Attitudes of Urban Africans," 172.

62 Kurt Danziger, "Ideology and Utopia in South Africa," British Journal of Sociology, 14 (1963), 64.

63 "Self-Attitudes of Urban Africans," 172, 175.

64 Rand Daily Mail, (Johannesburg), September 28, 1979; Rand Daily Mail, November 27, 1979.

65 For a useful summary of the literature on the 1976 Soweto riots, see Frank Molteno, "A Review of the Literature on Events in South Africa, 1976," Social Dynamics, 5 (1), 1979, 54-76.

66 Frankel, "Status, Group Consciousness and Political Participation," 21.

67 The main areas of conflict have been the Western and Eastern Cape Province. During 1979 many Colored schools in the Cape Peninsular were closed in a series of student strikes similar to those of Soweto three years earlier. Yet



Soweto students failed to demonstrate in sympathy, largely because of the belief that the Colored community had not displayed sufficient solidarity during the 1976 township disturbances.

<sup>68</sup> Christian Potholm, "South Africa and the Future: Illusion and Necessity," Africa Today, 1967, quoted in Schlemmer, "Political Adaption and Reaction," 16.

<sup>69</sup> Frankel, "Race and Counter-Revolution", 287.

<sup>70</sup> On the possibilities of central representation, see ibid., 282.

<sup>71</sup> Philip Frankel, "The Politics of Poverty: Political Competition in Soweto," Canadian Journal of African Studies. Vol 14. No. 2. 1980. pp. 201-220.

<sup>72</sup> Frankel, "Status, Group Consciousness and Political Participation," 13 et seq.

<sup>73</sup> Bennie A. Khoapa, "The New Black," in B.S. Biko, (ed.), Black Viewpoint. Johannesburg( Christian Institute of South Africa, 1972), 61-67.

<sup>74</sup> Frankel, "Status, Group Consciousness and Political Participation," 6.

### CHAPTER III

#### POLITICAL INTERACTION:

#### INKATHA, SCA AND THE SOWETO COUNCIL

##### I INTRODUCTION: THE ACTORS

The 1976 Soweto riots have tended to convey to impression of Johannesburg's black townships as the crucible of black resistance to apartheid, but unfortunately in a way which understates the magnitude of the problems confronting blacks in acting politically in South Africa, particularly in ways with the potential to challenge the existing system. The formal constraints on black political action - the complex network of interpenetrating security legislation, the virtual monopoly of the white elite over the military and police and its use of sophisticated technologies of control - are occasionally done justice. But less tangible more informal mechanisms that confine "legitimate" black politics within the narrow boundaries drawn by apartheid seldom receive the same attention. Bantu education and the daily experience of race relations project ideologies of subordination which undermine black personal and collective authenticity and inhibit the formation of radical political consciousness. Yet such important factors of political mobilization are normally neglected data. Both socio-economically deprived urban and rural communities are moreover highly susceptible to informal political sanctions<sup>1</sup>, and no systematic analysis of Johannesburg's black townships should ignore the fact that they are locked into vicious conditions of poverty which, through cognitive and behavioural channels, affect political organization and participation.<sup>2</sup> In Soweto political discontent is one matter:

remedial political action is quite another and is an element subject to economic risks and the elementary imperatives of daily survival.

In a very distinctive sense the 1976 disturbances compounded the difficulties associated with socio-economically deprived Soweto as a political actor. The "stay-away" campaign in the latter half of the year reaffirmed the fragility of economic boycotts as techniques of political protest on the part of Johannesburg's black urban poor, while the anomic nature of the latter's reaction to the crisis facilitated the task of the white authorities in creaming off the scarce political leadership which Soweto as a poor community suffers. At the same time, some forces in township life which were stimulated by the traumatic events of the period allow political mobilization largely independent of community poverty. Firstly, while poor people often tend to see governmental action as largely irrelevant to their instrumental concerns<sup>3</sup>, the bureaucratic activity accompanying apartheid is so intense and pervasive that in Soweto governmental authorities take on highly identifiable and almost tangible qualities. Because every individual is required almost daily to demonstrate the legality of his presence in the urban area, governmental action becomes an inescapable reality into most areas of social existence under normal conditions and into its minutest facets in times of social crisis. South Africa's segregationist policies have also assured the racial exclusiveness of the Soweto community which, although enormously heterogenous and both vertically and horizontally stratified, is nonetheless relatively tightly bound together in its political relations. The integrating cement of racial affiliation is by no means perfect - as we shall argue below - but in crisis situations of the dimensions of 1976, when the community is confronted with acute stress, racial unity results and in its turn both fuels and structures various forms of political action.

The political momentum of 1976 has in fact given rise to a series of township political organizations whose interaction has substantially altered the complexion of community politics, both in the Lesser and Greater Soweto areas.<sup>4</sup> The life-span of many of these groups has been restricted by limited sectional and transitional appeals: others, particularly those associated with the black consciousness movement, have had their activities terminated by governmental intervention. At the same time a number of these organizations tenaciously survive, and it is around three of these entities, each a power foci providing political leadership, organization and information that the politics of community control in Soweto revolve - with all their various ramifications for change in the wider South African political system.<sup>5</sup>

Political power in Soweto initially emanates out of the Soweto Council (hereafter referred to as simply the Council), established by the government in the terms of the Community Councils Act of 1977 to fill the institutional vacuum created by the collapse of the township Urban Bantu Council (UBC) in the wake of the 1976 riots. The first Council elections of 1978 were poorly supported, largely because many township dwellers see the body as continuous with the UBC, i.e. as a creature of government, or they are sceptical of its representativeness, dominated as it is by the Sofasonke Party, (the leading group in the UBC), led by David Thebehali, former UBC chairman and a prominent member of Soweto's miniscule yet politically influential middle class. Council members representing Lesser Soweto's thirty wards are nevertheless directly and popularly elected and while the body is essentially an administrative organ, it enjoys much wider power - for housing, raising revenue, and significantly, directing a community guard under the South African Police - than its UBC predecessor.<sup>6</sup> In addition, it is quite likely that these powers will be extended into

the executive realm in line with Nationalist party policy to gradually upgrade the Council into a fully-fledged and more credible municipal body armed possibly with a variety of functions not normally enjoyed by South African local government institutions.<sup>7</sup>

Many Sowetons, particularly the young and adherents of black consciousness philosophy, identify however with the second major element in the township political network i.e. the more radically-oriented and spontaneously-formed Soweto Civic Association (SCA). This particular organization grew out of the 1976 student riots which led to the formation of a Black Parents Association as a gesture of solidarity with the Soweto Students Representatives Council (SSRC), and, in June 1977, of a Soweto Local Authority Interim Committee (SLAIC), composed of leading members of the townships' professional, business and intellectual elite, all are specifically concerned with elevating Soweto's governmental status.<sup>8</sup> Informally referred to as the Committee of Ten, SLAIC members were detained in the government crackdown on black consciousness groups in October 1977, yet the body itself was not proscribed and had by 1978 once more reconstituted itself as a pressure group working in support of an elaborately constructed "Blueprint for Soweto" drawn up by its leaders in 1977. Under the energetic direction of Nthatho Motlana, a local medical practitioner and ex-secretary of the banned African National Congress Youth League, the Committee has since functioned as a vociferous critic of the Community Councils Act and of Nationalist policy in the black urban areas more generally. In September 1979, largely to indicate the depth of its community support, the decision was taken to convert the Committee into the executive of a more formally structured and popularly-based organization ostensibly devoted to local matters.<sup>10</sup> In the short period since, despite the refusal of the government to recognise its existence, the newly-named SCA has attracted significant

support through its 33 branches in Lesser Soweto and has stimulated the formation of analogous civic organizations in other black urban areas.<sup>11</sup>

The third and perhaps most important element in Soweto's tripartite power constellation is Kwazulu Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha movement. It is locally represented by such individuals as Gibson Thula, Inkatha's Transvaal leader and Dr. Siphon Nyembezi, its chief Soweto representative. In two vital respects this organization differs from both the Council and SCA. Firstly, while both these bodies derive from the 1976 riots, the one created by government the other by popular action, Inkatha has far deeper origins. It dates back fifty years to the formation of Inkatha kaZulu in 1928 as a vehicle for the cultural liberation of the Zulu people.<sup>12</sup> It was not until the early seventies that a revived Inkatha appeared in the urban areas in the Transvaal yet behind the movement there lies a national organization, (estimated to be backed by a quarter of a million members), and a lengthy historic tradition to which neither the Council nor SCA can lay comparable claim. Secondly, although the Inkatha of the seventies is technically committed to black liberation<sup>13</sup> - the movement has in fact been renamed Inkatha Yenkululeko YeSizwe i.e. of the people - It is popularly seen as a tribal movement, its membership is overwhelmingly Zulu in origin and much of its strength is drawn from Sowetons who value their ethnic attachments for political purposes within racial boundaries.<sup>14</sup> Not all Sowetons of Zulu extraction belong formally to Inkatha which is conservatively estimated to have twenty thousand members in the townships,<sup>15</sup> but the overwhelming majority of Zulus either permanently resident in the area or present as migrant labor are sentimentally affiliated.<sup>16</sup> As the Zulu group is also the largest and most insular ethnic group in urban Soweto, Inkatha is, despite its tribal and rural origins, a political force to be reckoned with.

## II PATTERNS OF INTERACTION

It should be emphasized that the relations between Soweto's three main political actors display many consensual features. These derive, in the last analysis from the fact that they are all racially exclusive bodies either (in the case of the Council and SCA) because of their formation in a segregated context, or, in the case of Inkatha, because of legislative prohibitions on non-racial political organizations.<sup>17</sup> Similarities of political perception and action also stem from the fact that as black organizations in a race-saturated and discriminatory setting each is bound to be seen to function as a conduit for black interests in opposition to the present white-dominated system. This means that if each is to survive and to remain credible it must condemn the abuses associated with apartheid and, in some fashion, work for its elimination. All have in fact acted out this logic by rejecting "bantú education", influx control, the denial of land tenure to urban blacks and the more general conditions which have kept Soweto historically in a situation of political limbo and continual poverty.<sup>18</sup> All three concur on the need for some new national political dispensation to redress the maldistribution of power between the races, and all are commonly opposed to violent means of political change for a mixture of practical and ethical reasons.<sup>19</sup> Racial affinities and situational imperatives have also supported occasional consultation - such as that following the recent visit of the Reverend Jessie Jackson to the townships<sup>20</sup> - and collaborative action. Thus the government's decision to free detained Committee of Ten members in early 1978 was largely the result of Inkatha's refusal to endorse the forthcoming Council elections as long as Committee members were imprisoned<sup>21</sup>.

The constituencies to which political organizations respond and the circumstances surrounding organizational formation are however influential

in determining subsequent political reactions and operating styles and it is here that differences substantial enough to cancel out elements of consensus appear among the three community actors. The Council, for example, is locked into a patron-client relationship with white government and relies heavily on the support of the more compliant members of Soweto's small middle class community. Both these factors combine to produce a highly instrumental and parochialized brand of political action which cannot essentially confront the discriminatory system. David Thebehali has condemned the more blatant injustices of apartheid, but he has also taken pains to emphasize the "realism" of negotiations with the Nationalist government whom he foresees as likely to remain the focus of national power for the immediate future.<sup>22</sup> Thebehali has also stressed the importance of improving Soweto's service grid over and beyond ideological and national political issues and in rationalizing the Council's collaborative stand he has tended to draw a sharp distinction between immediate civic needs and wider movements to overhaul the entire political system.<sup>23</sup> From this perspective, confrontative-type action, which the Council associates with the SCA, is unrealistic, destructive and ultimately immoral.

The political logic informing the SCA is vastly different. Forged spontaneously in the anti-government disturbances of 1976, infused with black consciousness doctrines and closely linked to the volatile local student body, the SCA's political style is at once far more ideological and nationalistic than that of the Council, which it lumps with Inkatha, as an agent of the apartheid system. As urban-germinated movements both the SCA and the Council oppose ethnic-based politics of the Inkatha-type. These it labels divisive of black political unity. The SCA is also considerably more intense in its hostility to the "homelands" as platforms for black action, and it rejects Inkatha's



and the Council's willingness to engage in unconditional dialogue with the white government.<sup>25</sup> Reasoning from past experience in Soweto and South Africa more generally, the SCA has little faith in Inkatha and Council contentions that statutorily-created organizations can be manipulated to further black interests or that their powers can be extended to the point of effective participation in local and national decision-making processes. The SCA is also sceptical of the primacy placed by the Council on civic concerns to the exclusion of national issues and although Dr. Motlana, with an eye to political safety, is careful to avoid defining the SCA as a nationalist political movement, there is a tendency in the SCA to see local and national issues affected blacks as inextricably interrelated.<sup>26</sup>

Soweto's Inkatha branches are far more ambiguously situated than either the SCA or the Council and the Zulu-dominated movement suffers many of the problems confronting rural-based African traditional movements in an urban political setting.<sup>27</sup> Inkatha also faces an additional contradiction. It is an apartheid-related institution linked to the Kwazulu Territorial Authority. But its leadership is publicly committed to repudiating the apartheid system. The result is a complex and heavily blended style of political behaviour reflecting the various cross-tensions to which the movement is subject. Thus, while Buthelezi condemns the "negative collaboration" and pragmatic adjustments both of the Council and the homeland areas which, unlike Kwazulu, have accepted "independence",<sup>28</sup> he nevertheless argues in favor of a multi-faceted, negotiatory and essentially practical approach to South African problems.<sup>29</sup> He rejects what he sees to be confrontational postures and techniques adopted by the SCA and other black consciousness-oriented organizations. On this basis the Transvaal section of Inkatha has agreed to serve on the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal regional committee recently established by

government to advise it on the problems of urban blacks<sup>30</sup> and individual members of Inkatha were allowed by its leadership to participate in the 1978 Soweto Council elections.<sup>31</sup> Yet, while Inkatha's basic resources come from rural Zulus to whose segmental interests it must be especially sensitive, its also represents itself as an instrument of black liberation, analogous to the trans-ethnic urban SCA, and similarly committed to a black-ruled unitary political system.

In essence the divisions between Inkatha, the Council and the SCA concern the means rather than the ends of the black political struggle.<sup>32</sup> Yet the differences are still fundamental, particularly on the issue which has always plagued black resistance, namely the meaning and tolerable extent of collaboration with apartheid justified by the interests of the black population.<sup>33</sup> Taking its cue from such recent predecessors as the Black Peoples Convention (BPC) which favoured maximum black withdrawal from inter-racial transactions as a necessary technique of conscientization, the SCA sees Inkatha and the Council as "system blacks" whose involvement in government-created institutions far exceeds the threshold set by the imperatives of daily survival.<sup>34</sup> From the Inkatha and Council position, the workings of bantu education, the pass system and the normal pattern of black-white social intercourse engenders a minimal collaborative threshold far more intense and elaborated than the SCA is willing to concede. In this case the SCA's rigid anti-collaborationist strategy is, as David Thebehali and Buthelezi continually assert, unrealistic, and in the last analysis, simply sanctimonious.<sup>35</sup> Between Inkatha and the Council lies the tortuous distinction between "justifiable" and "unjustifiable" collaboration, normally taken to mean involvement with apartheid genuinely motivated by the collective interests of blacks - to which both organizations lay claim - as opposed to instrumental and opportunistic involvement, of which each body accuses the other.

Of late, deepening personal antagonisms between the political leaderships of the respective groupings have heightened the adversary relations between the townships' three major political organizations, and have created opportunities for manipulative and disorganizing action by white authority, (a point to which we will return). This in turn engenders an atmosphere of intense communal political competition in which each actor works to accumulate maximum support for its claims to local leadership.

Several considerations condition this internecine dynamic. Not the least important are patterns of inter-organizational penetration operating among the townships' three leading political organizations, and between each of them and the strong of secondary movements - including the Soweto Action Committee, the Soweto Residents Committee, the Soweto Students League (SSL), the Makgotla - which have made their appearance on the margins of local power since the 1976 disturbances.<sup>36</sup> All three of the major organizations have to differing degrees cultivated relations with these fringe groups, either with an eye to subsuming them or in the interests of alliance-building, particularly with what are in all probability the two most powerful in the group - Siegfried Mathanta's tribal-oriented Makgotla movement with its fiefdom over the western areas of Soweto, and the township student body, now led by the SSL following the banning of the SSRC, with its network extending out to embrace the remnants of the black consciousness movement.<sup>37</sup> The Council has displayed a particular interest in cutting into the local ethnic network through the Makgotla, some of whose members, such as Eric Mathinbanyane and Josiah Mosikare, are active participants in Council affairs in an individual rather than organizational capacity. Quite recently the Council sought to exploit factional conflict within the Makgotla, while unlike its UBC predecessor,

the Council has adopted a mildly favourable if fluctuating attitude towards governmental legislation of the Makgotla system of law enforcement bearing its own interests as the sole legally-recognized representative of Soweto in mind.<sup>38</sup> While temporary alliances have been concluded between individual Makgotla and Inkatha members, such as during the 1978 Council elections<sup>39</sup>, and while the Makgotla refused to participate in these elections during the time of the Committee of Ten detentions,<sup>40</sup> neither the SCA nor Inkatha is comparably placed relative to the Council to explore this particular political avenue, the former on account of its implacable opposition to ethnic politics and Inkatha because of the strong Sotho orientation of the majority of Makgotla associations.

Both Inkatha and (to a more marked extent) the SCA are nonetheless better situated to exploit the potential of alliances with Soweto's politicized student body, highly critical as it is of the Council as a government-created institution. Members of the now proscribed SSRC were present at the birth of the Committee of Ten, and relations between the two entities remain close with the youth inclined to view the Committee as the "parent expression" of their own political and social demands. At the same time, despite the fact that Inkatha is reviled in many quarters of the student community, it has since 1976 made a variety of quite positive inroads into the student grouping, undercutting SCA relations, particularly amongst Zulu-oriented township youth. Inkatha's strong line on bantu education as well as publicly-expressed willingness to make the facilities of Kwazulu schools available to young Sowetons experiencing difficulty in acquiring an education must be seen as part of this development.<sup>41</sup>

It should also be emphasized that the SCA is linked, sentimentally and through overlapping membership with such black consciousness

organisations as the Teachers Action Committee (TAC) and the black consciousness lobby in the South African Council of Churches. Together these make up what opponents denigrate as the "Regina Mundi clique", on the basis of their tendency to hold common public meetings in Soweto's large if disorganized labor force both by playing upon the middle-class character of the Council and SCA leadership and by appointing itself local watchdog over the implementation of the Sullivan investment code principles<sup>42</sup>. Finally, the three major organizations have also sought to inter-penetrate each other, particularly Inkatha and the Council. Inkatha condemnations of the Council have tended to be far more equivocal than those of the SCA and many leading members of the Council, including its leader Thebehali, are either Zulu's and/or members of the Inkatha movement. In the 1978 Council elections Inkatha lent support to its own members who wished to participate as delegates, and in recent months as the Council has acquired increased if still limited powers Inkatha has begun to reappraise its past refusal to enter Council affairs on an organizational basis.

Intra-organizational factors are also important in the community power struggle. Relative to the Council and Inkatha - the one drawing organizational resources from white authority, the other from a sophisticated network of national proportions - the SCA is at a distinct disadvantage. As the Committee of Ten it was essentially a loose amalgam of township influentials constantly prey to government sanctions. The recent decision to establish a formal civic body is in good part motivated by the desire to offset this situation. It remains however to be seen whether the SCA's plans to establish a more carefully articulated community-wide network of ward associations will materialize and whether its very success in doing so invites further government retributions.

Neither the Council nor Inkatha are however immune from the politically debilitating effects of internal division. Deep personality conflicts have plagued the Council since its inception. These tend to be politicized through coincidences with different perceptions of the rate at which executive power can and should be devolved upon the Council by the authorities. Two distinct factions have actually emerged in the dominant Sotho Party, the one led by Thebehali and his deputy and close confidant, Tolika Makhaya, the other by prominent Soweto businessman Ephraim Tshabalala. Both claim to represent the party against Edward Manyosi's Soweto Federal Party opposition. At the same time insofar as Thebehali's opponents have focussed on his past associations with the UBC and the tendency of his arbitrary style of action to short-circuit procedural regularities, the wider political and economic issues of Soweto's development have been subsumed in an internecine melee casting serious doubts on the ability of the Council to act effectively as an administrative or political unit.<sup>44</sup>

In the Inkatha case ethnic homogeneity counteracts internal disunity only imperfectly, both because Inkatha is a more widely cast organization than either of its competitors and because of its complex mixture of Zulu ethnic and black nationalist pretensions. In reality the delicate balance between rural, urban, Zulu and black interests is not often maintained. Inkatha is frequently torn between the conflicting demands of migrant Zulu workers and Zulus born in the townships. It must simultaneously reconcile Zulu and non-Zulu organization members seeking satisfaction of their various claims. Within the ethnic framework there are varying degrees of commitment among Zulus to the idea of a reformulated Inkatha primarily concerned with black liberation. Across racial boundaries the movement also

needs to establish its identity as a black organization participant in the Black-Indian-Coloured Black Alliance.<sup>45</sup>

One of the more important factors sustaining Inkatha in the face of these diverse challenges is the gregariousness of its political leaders especially Chief Buthelezi. Charismatic politics basically involves a personification of publicly relevant symbols. Buthelezi with his flamboyant manner of speech, his syncretistic style of dress - alternatively Afro, Zulu and European - and his astute manipulation of carefully tailored ethnic and nationalist symbols has proved remarkably adept at image-building.<sup>46</sup> Both the Council and the SCA face serious problems of public image, the former because of its associations with the white Nationalist government, the latter because its low profile in the face of governmental threats is widely confused with political inaction. Both the urbane Thebehali and Dr. Motlana have attempted to re-educate public opinion. In Thebehali's case this has involved occasional verbal forays against Nationalist policy, in the case of the SCA, through intensified involvement in community projects and services. At the same time, neither the leaders of the Council nor the SCA have the flamboyance, or the supporting public relations personnel to resonate on township consciousness like Buthelezi.<sup>47</sup>

In practice, both the SCA and Inkatha compete in their claims to the symbols of black liberation, although Inkatha, largely because of the personal dispositions of its leadership, includes more to the non-racial ideology of the African National Congress, particularly that espoused by it prior to its adoption of the course of liberation through violence following 1960.<sup>48</sup> The projection of black nationalist rather than Zulu symbols is regarded as vital by Inkatha leadership in breaking down the widespread image of the movement as, what its secretary-general Oscar Dhlomo has characterised, a "Zulu Broederbond".<sup>49</sup> This

has prompted a number of symbolic and practically important alterations in Inkatha's constitution, including the removal of any references to Kwazulu, the opening of its leadership to non-Zulus and, significantly enough, the adoption of the black, gold and green of the ANC as its own official colours.<sup>50</sup> Carefully calculated attempts to distinguish Kwazulu from other supposedly "artificial" homelands that have accepted independence<sup>51</sup> are complemented by a public rhetoric liberally spiced with ANC terminology and moderate African socialist conceptions. Buthelezi is personally notorious for his frequent allusions to the compatibility of ends, if not means, of Inkatha and the ANC and his own close ties with Mandela, Sisulu and Luthuli. The latter, he points out, was also a Zulu chieftain.<sup>52</sup> Whether the SCA can partially or wholly appropriate these carefully interwoven symbols, especially in circumstances where the banned ANC is not in a position publicly to repudiate Inkatha's public relations effort to the average Soweton, is far from self-evident.

### III EXTERNAL PENETRATION: THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Soweto, as has already been noted, displays most of the characteristics of a poverty habitat one consequence of which is a finite quantity of endogenous human and material political resources and a low threshold of permeability to extra-communal influences and pressures. All three major contestants in the township power struggle are sensitive both to the fact that the conduct of local politics is highly susceptible to attitudes and actions originating beyond community boundaries, and that any township political organization must to some extent link up to actors in the national power grid if they are to ensure their survival and extend their township constituency. They devote substantial energy to blunting political pressures flowing downwards from the national level whenever these are seen to be



detrimental to the local accumulation of power, and, more positively, to encouraging local-national linkages where these favour their respective political interests in the townships. Inkatha has, for example, established a nation-wide newspaper, "The Nation"; not only to disseminate the movement's viewpoint but also to counteract the tendency of the established white-dominated and ethnic-lensed media to influence negatively its position in Soweto and other urban areas by presenting it as an instrument of Zulu imperialism rooted in a militant historic tradition.<sup>53</sup> In the same fashion the SCA has linked into the newly-established Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO) through personality ties and a common commitment to black consciousness philosophy. It has also sought to cultivate a nation-wide system of independent loosely-linked black civic associations.<sup>54</sup> The subtle filaments binding local politics to wider arena are also indicated by a similar interest on the part of the Council in an association of community councils, the so-called Urban Administration Association of South Africa, formed to bypass bantu administration boards to negotiate directly with central government authorities.<sup>55</sup>

Reflecting systemic developments, two external actors especially influence political formations in the townships. These are the underground liberation movement, the Pan African Congress but particularly the African National Congress, and given the notoriously deep susceptibility of poor environment to governmental actions and performance,<sup>56</sup> the present white Nationalist government.

The political role of the ANC behind the polite tripartite struggle between Inkatha, the SCA and the Council is well-nigh impossible to delineate: it is, needless to say, equally difficult to measure the extent it draws off individual participation and commitment

from these three organizations, Inkatha and SCA in particular. Available evidence nonetheless suggests that sentimental if not activist support for the ANC is quite substantial in Soweto - certainly more so than for the rival Pan African Congress. It is probably for this reason both Inkatha and (to a lesser extent) SCA welcome ANC approval despite frequent disclaimers designed for government consumption. Inkatha is especially public in its claims to have developed some sort of relationship with the banned organization although it is far from certain whether these have any substance given the tactical differences between the two bodies on such issues as the role of violence in the liberation struggle, foreign disinvestment in the South African economy and dialogue with white power-holders.<sup>57</sup> However, urban blacks identifying with the ANC are markedly less hostile to Inkatha than those identifying with the Pan African Congress.<sup>58</sup> Black consciousness it should also be added has never rested easily in ANC circles and it remains unclear whether the SCA experiences more success in cultivating ANC linkages despite the fact that relative to Inkatha it carries more credible and largely untainted anti-apartheid credentials.

More obvious is the fact that virtually every aspect of Soweton life is regulated by governmental action. This works through such inter-connecting institutions as the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB), the newly-renamed Department of Cooperation and Development (once the Department of Bantu Administration) and the South African police force. For all practical purposes white governmental authority is today the major repository of rewards and sanctions in relation to the township community. In the circumstances it is in an inordinately powerful position to structure the political balance in the black urban areas.

Poor political actors are heavily influenced by the actuality or threat of governmental sanctions.<sup>59</sup> All three of Soweto's major

organizations work in the shadow of government surveillance. Of them, the relatively radical SCA, many of whose leaders have been detained in the past, needs to be most sensitive to the possibility of repression. Neither the Council nor, to a lesser extent, Inkatha is equally susceptible to this precarious situation with its tendency to set low objective and subjective ceilings on political activism. The Council basically functions compliantly under the apartheid umbrella, and Inkatha in the aura of the domestic and international stature of its national leader. Inkatha has occasionally run afoul of the authorities. Editions of "The Nation" have, for example, been banned. However to proscribe the organization or arrest its leaders, many who like Buthelezi have risen on apartheid platforms, would be an admission of the failure of Nationalist policy too costly to bear. On the basis of this calculation Inkatha has gradually thrown off the veil of black cultural liberation in favour of more specifically political commitments. Buthelezi believes he can react against apartheid with some degree of impunity. Whether this continues to be the case or not, the white authorities at present confine their regulation of Inkatha to the use of mild instruments of control such as the Prohibition of Political Interferences Act which technically, if not effectively, limits membership to individuals of Zulu origin.<sup>60</sup>

Government does not however only set the boundaries of legitimate black political competition in Soweto, disorganizing the creaming off leadership beyond these narrow thresholds: it also acts, more positively, in a selective support capacity to deny various township organizations access to institutionalized rewards and resources. The experience of the Urban Bantu Council has tended to encourage the view that the role of beneficiary in the distribution of governmental largesse is fatal for any black organization seeking communal support. Yet it is also a

fact that in Soweto, as any poor setting deprivation encourages instrumental mass perception<sup>61</sup> so that any group so to be attached to a tangible source of rewards can experience elevated status largely independent of its origin and composition. In Soweto there are also vestiges of "residual ruralism" conducive to the replication of clientalist political systems in the urban areas.<sup>62</sup> This suggests that if the Council can exploit its patronage relationship with white authority to filter real gains in the form of housing and social services into the townships it could conceivably develop into a more extended and genuine focus of popular identification. Government policy has tended to shift unpopular decisions to the Council under the guise of "devolved power".<sup>63</sup> Were it willing and able to arm its local black representatives with sufficient political and economic muscle adequately to address the more pressing and important material issues facing the community, it could well facilitate a reorientation of the view of the Council as an irrelevant and ineffective body.<sup>64</sup> This means Soweto's future politics becoming very much a matter of a variety of "external" considerations, particularly, it seems, the relationship between the Council and the West Rand Bantu Administration Board (WRAB), the most immediately responsible white government body in the townships. Whether WRAB resists devolutions of power to the Council in order to protect its institutional interests is an important variable in this regard.<sup>65</sup> The ability of the Council to reduce its own internal conflicts and emerge as an efficient administrative body will also affect the political rewards government derives from any welfare policy. Finally, the capacity of the Council to bargain with white government and break down the traditional resistance of the central authorities to plough "white" resources into the black urban areas, will condition future social and political developments in the townships.<sup>66</sup>

Cooptation is a widely used technique of political control exercised over poor communities in various states of material deprivation.<sup>67</sup> There are many indications that the Nationalists today appreciate the political wisdom of upgrading Soweto as part of the new "total strategy".<sup>68</sup> The recent decision to grant "qualified" urban blacks ninety-nine year leaseholds in the metropolitan areas of "white" South Africa, the commitment of the authorities to a phased development plan for Soweto culminating in all probability in a city-state status for the townships,<sup>69</sup> and the unusual repetitiveness of central authorities to subsidize infrastructure development in the black concentrations<sup>70</sup> should all be taken as part of a deliberate support-building effort geared to urban blacks in general, and, in particular, their small but influential middle class. For a more extended discussion of 'total strategy' and its attempts at support-building in the townships, see Ch. VII, below. Inasmuch as white private enterprise helps finance social services in the townships and promotes the development of a black business sector, government's efforts to mesh black middle class and white elite interests gain momentum.

The Council, naturally enough, is the least resistant of all of Soweto's major actors to the inducements of this cooptive strategy. Inkatha and the SCA are however not entirely ignorant of the distinct advantages of linking into the white power network. At the national level Inkatha (unlike the SCA) has endorsed the activities of the Schlebusch Commission currently at work to devise a consociational constitutional formula for South Africa. The movement's recent willingness to contest Soweto Council elections in the future indicates a definite appreciation of the political values of access to government mechanisms, however imperfectly associated with the distribution of tangible benefits. If this blending of the traditionalist

and patron-client networks in the township takes place along lines similar to some African systems,<sup>71</sup> Inkatha will become locked into what is a deradicalize relationship with white government analogous to that in which the Council finds itself. Government options for manipulating and neutralizing different township political interests will be extended.

The mechanisms of cooptation working in the direction of the SCA are more subtle and insidious. Governmental-SCA differences on civic matters are not only far narrower than many SCA supporters are willing to concede: the SCA leadership is also largely middle class in composition and is clearly in favor of one of the major objectives of the "total strategy", i.e. the preservation of free enterprise capitalism. There are distinct differences between the Council's and SCA's and the Nationalist government's understanding of Soweton municipal autonomy. Many of these differences are tactical. They concern timing and organizational matters and do not in themselves preclude some form of reconciliation between the three actors. It is important to note that the Committee of Ten's "Blueprint for Soweto" was widely hailed for its moderation in white circles. They were quick to detect the analogies between some of the document's proposals and government thinking.<sup>72</sup> Since 1977, with the Nationalists now committed to full municipal status for Soweto, there are good grounds for believing that the range of differences have even more appreciably narrowed. Unlike Inkatha which supports a peculiar blend of African socialism and free enterprise capitalism<sup>73</sup> SCA leaders focus heavily on the need to develop a more pure form of black capitalism. Many, including Lekgau Mathubatho and even SCA leader Dr. Motlana are personally involved in the development of the black business sector.<sup>74</sup> Inasmuch as this objective is perfectly compatible with the recipes

for stabilization advanced by white mining, commercial and industrial interests, SCA actions may well come to feed rather than oppose the cooptive momentum.

To prognosticate about Soweto's political future in the light of the complex internal and external factors impacting on township politics is extremely difficult. South Africa's political situation is, in addition, very fluid at present. Given the tendency of political crisis to engender new organizational forms and shift power distributions, it is quite likely that some future political disturbances along the lines of 1976 will disrupt the current pattern. It will produce new political groups, enervate old-established bodies or induce alliance-formations inconceivable at present. There are, however, some indications that, ceteris parabus, the present three-way interaction will decompose into a simpler two-way struggle between extended versions of the SCA and Inkatha.

Client political bodies are normally disadvantaged in manipulating their patrons.<sup>75</sup> In the Soweto case governmental action is unlikely to salvage the Council, because it is unlikely to be weaned away from its guiding spirit of political and economic gradualism which maintains the black institution in its presently discredited and disembodied form.<sup>76</sup> Inkatha's decision formally to enter the realm of Council politics will also probably prove to be irresistible. It will, it seems, lead to the fusion of what are presently two distinct bodies into a single Inkatha-dominated unit. In this eventuality Inkatha will be strategically placed to influence policy calculations on both the part of the ANC and the Nationalist government. Neither of them will be able to ignore Inkatha's institutionalized monopoly over South Africa's largest and most politically important urban black concentration.<sup>77</sup> For its part Inkatha is likely to use its leverage to pressure government to

accelerate township development and to induce the ANC into a relationship lending legitimacy to its own operations as an instrument of black liberation. And to the extent that it succeeds in one of these areas reciprocally lends stature to its activities in the other.

If community organizations among the poor have constantly to extend their activities in the interests of popular credibility and support<sup>78</sup>, it can be anticipated that SCA will become increasingly involved in national political issues, ultimately to emerge as a fully-crystallized, activist, high-profile mass movement. In the context of township politics however this movement will doubtlessly recruit its constituency from a diversity of quarters opposed to Inkatha dominance of the Council, to participation in government-created institutions more generally, and towards Inkatha's tendency to moderate the political climate in the townships. The SCA will thus emerge as a receptacle for a wide variety of township interests - black conscious radicals of differing class backgrounds,<sup>79</sup> non-Zulus apprehensive at the prospect of a local Zulu imperium, alienated and politically de-ethnicized individuals of Zulu extraction. Its political future will depend very heavily on the extent to which its leadership can forge this mixture of men and motives into a coherent political body. Whether it does, depends on the capacity of Inkatha to manipulate institutional mechanisms to distribute rewards and enlarge its popular base beyond ethnic boundaries. But the future of SCA also depends on the resistance of its members, its leaders in particular, to the attractive yet ultimately demobilizing temptations of cooptative power. In the event they prove vulnerable, the already fragile state of community, racial and political solidarity in the townships will be further shattered.



FOOTNOTES.

<sup>1</sup> It has however been argued that poor rural communities are more sensitive to informal political sanctions. See Gerritt Huizer, "Resistance to Change and Radical Peasant Mobilization: Foster and Erasmus Reconsidered," Human Organization, 29 (Winter 1970), pp 303-312.

<sup>2</sup> The literature on the political consequences of poverty is vast. Among representative works are - Wayne A. Cornelius, Politics and the Migrant Poor in Mexico City. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975); Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail. (New York: Pantheon, 1977); Lee Rainwater, "Neighborhood Action and Lower Class Life Styles," in John B. Turner (ed.), Neighborhood Organization for Community Action (New York: National Association for Social Workers, 1968); Mayer N. Zald and Robert Ash, "Social Movement Organization: Growth, Decay and Change," in Joseph R. Gusfeld (ed.), Protest, Reform and Revolt (New York, Wiley, 1970); James Q. Wilson, "The Strategy of Protest: Problems of Negro Civic Action," Journal of Conflict Resolution, 5, September 1969, pp 291-303; Talton Ray, The Politics of the Barrios of Venezuela (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); Joan Nelson, Migrants, Urban Poverty and Instability in New Nations (Cambridge, Harvard University, Center for International Affairs, Occasional Paper, No. 22, September 1969).

<sup>3</sup> The relationship between socio-economic status and political behavior is dealt with in a vast literature. Among the extant works see, Sidney Verba and Norman Nie, Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); Sidney Verba, Norman Nie and Laeon Kim, The Modes of Democratic Participation (Beverley Hills: Sage Professional Papers, Comparative Politics Series, No. 01-013, 1971).

<sup>4</sup> The term 'Lesser Soweto' refers to the entire South-Western Townships complex minus the three townships of Diepkloof, Meadowlands and Dobsonville. These areas have been administered separately from Soweto for many years and today they have their own community councils, the Dobsonville and Diepmeadow councils, distinct from Lesser Soweto's Soweto Council.

<sup>5</sup> On the relationship between political organization, leadership and learning see Wayne Cornelius, Political Learning Among the Migrant Poor (Beverley Hills: Sage Professional Papers, Comparative Politics Series, No. 01-137, 1973); Daniel Goldrich, Raymond Pratt and C.R. Schuller, "The Political Integration of Lower Class Urban Settlements in Chile and Peru," in Louis Horowitz (ed.), Masses in Latin America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>6</sup> See Philip Frankel, "Municipal Transformation in Soweto: Race, Politics and Maladministration in Black Johannesburg," African Studies Review, XXII, September

1979, pp 49-65.

<sup>7</sup> This point emerged from the report of the Schlebusch Commission recently established to devise a new South African constitution.

<sup>8</sup> Among the demands made by SLAIC was a call for the establishment of a "totally autonomous" Soweto city council, responsibility of the body direct to parliament, the removal of the West Rand Bantu Administration Board, and the creation of machinery for municipal elections. According to SLAIC, the Soweto City Council would control township education, raise taxes and direct a township police force. On SLAIC, the Black Parents Association and the Committee of Ten, see Sunday Times (Johannesburg), July 10, 1977; The Star (Johannesburg), July 13, 1977; Sunday Times, July 24, 1977; The Star, February 16, 1978.

<sup>9</sup> On the 'Blueprint for Soweto' see The Star, July 27, 1977; The World (Johannesburg), July 28, 1977.

<sup>10</sup> post (Johannesburg), September 24, 1979.

<sup>11</sup> Black civic associations along the lines of the SCA have also been established in Diepkloof and, wider afield, in the Port Elizabeth area. See The Star, September 27, 1979; Post, November 8, 1979.

<sup>12</sup> On the philosophy, historical background and organization of Inkatha see M.E. Bongu, Cultural Liberation: Principles and Practices (Pietermaritzburg, Schuter and Shooter, 1975); Inkatha Yenkululeko Yosizwe National Cultural Liberation Movement (South African Institute of Race

Relations, Natal Region, Information Sheet No 1. 66/77): Gerry Maree, "Class Formation in the South African Reserve Areas: Inkatha - a Study," (Paper presented at conference, History of Opposition in South Africa, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 27/30 January 1978; Gatsha Buthelezi, "The South African Free Capitalist System and the Black People of South Africa," (Speech to the Institute of Entrepreneurship and Management, University of Stellenbosch; Seminar, Change, Orientation and Planning, Durban, 19/22 May 1976; Gatsha Buthelezi, "Address to the African People in Soweto," October 28, 1973; Gatsha Buthelezi, "A Message to South Africa From Black South Africa," Speech in Soweto, March 14, 1976. The presidential addresses and minutes of Inkatha conventions, reports in the Inkatha press, and the constitution of the movement are also important data sources.

<sup>13</sup> See Gatsha Buthelezi, "Visit to Riot-Town Soweto," Press release, August 26, 1976: Sunday Tribune (Durban) June 6, 1975.

<sup>14</sup> On the role of ethnicity in political transactions within and across racial boundaries, see A.L. Epstein, Politics in an Urban African Community (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1958).

<sup>15</sup> Rand Daily Mail, August 12, 1977.

<sup>16</sup> The nature of the South African political and cultural climate makes it almost impossible to conduct systematic attitude surveys in the townships. Data of this

nature, as emphasized above, should be treated with due caution.

<sup>17</sup> The reference in this instance is to the so-called Prohibition of Political Interferences Act which makes it illegal for individuals of different races to form common political organizations.

<sup>18</sup> On the positions taken on these issues by the various actors see Rand Daily Mail, September 28, 1979; Rand Daily Mail, March 25, 1978; Post, November 22, 1977; Rand Daily Mail, April 12, 1978; Rand Daily Mail, July 4, 1978.

<sup>19</sup> On Buthelezi's and Motlana's attitudes on the question of violence, see Post, March 27, 1979; Rand Daily Mail, September 28, 1979; Rand Daily Mail, November 27, 1979.

<sup>20</sup> The Star, July 31, 1979; The Star, August 1, 1979.

<sup>21</sup> Rand Daily Mail, March 25, 1978.

<sup>22</sup> Rand Daily Mail, April 3, 1979.

<sup>23</sup> Rand Daily Mail, July 4, 1978; Rand Daily Mail, October 24, 1979.

<sup>24</sup> Members of the Soweto Council have, for example, strongly resisted the idea of urban representatives of the homeland governments participating in Council debates. See Rand Daily Mail, July 4, 1978.

<sup>25</sup> The SCA is only prepared to enter into dialogue with the authorities where it leads to what it terms the "dismantling of apartheid". Rand Daily Mail, March 16, 1979.

'dismantling of apartheid'. Strict non-collaboration is one of the central planks in the SCA platform. Post, September 25, 1979.

<sup>26</sup> Rand Daily Mail, September 28, 1979.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Peter Gutkind, "African Urban Chiefs," in Paul Meadows and Ephraim H. Mizruchi (eds.), Urbanism, Urbanization and Change (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1969); Abner Cohen, Custom and Politics in Urban Africa (Berkeley; University of California Press, 1979).

<sup>28</sup> Rand Daily Mail, April 26, 1978.

<sup>29</sup> Post, March 27, 1979. On the "multi-strategy" approach, see also "The Dismantling of Racism in South Africa Calls for a New and Multi-Strategy Approach," Speech delivered by Duthelazi at Portland University, U.S.A. March 1, 1977.

<sup>30</sup> Rand Daily Mail, May 16, 1979.

<sup>31</sup> The Star, March 17, 1978.

<sup>32</sup> The Star, October 23, 1979.

<sup>33</sup> See, inter alia, Edward Feit, African Opposition in South Africa (Stanford: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, 1967).

<sup>34</sup> On the Black Peoples Convention and black consciousness in general see, Heribert Adam, "The Rise of Black Consciousness in South Africa," Race 2 (October 1973); Bonnie A. Khoapa, "Black Consciousness," South African Outlook

(June/July 1972): Bennie A. Khoapa (ed.), Black Review 1972 (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1973): Gail M. Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

<sup>35</sup> Rand Daily Mail, April 26, 1978. See also the views put forward by Motlana, Rand Daily Mail, September 28, 1979.

<sup>36</sup> The Soweto Action Committee was absorbed into the Azanian Peoples Organization (AZAPO) with the latter's formation in 1979. The Soweto Students League is now the main student political organization in the townships following the banning of the Soweto Students Representative Committee (SSRC) during October 1977. The Soweto Residents Committee represents a wide number of small community self-help organizations. It was established following the 1976 disturbances. The Makgotla is essentially a system of tribal courts backed by vigilantes. It was established well before 1976 to deal with escalating crime rates in the black areas of Johannesburg.

<sup>37</sup> On the Makgotla see Rand Daily Mail, May 17, 1977: Rand Daily Mail, June 23, 1977.

<sup>38</sup> Post, March 4, 1978: Post, June 19, 1978: Post, November 28, 1978: Post, February 16, 1979.

<sup>39</sup> The Star, March 28, 1978.

<sup>40</sup> Post, November 7, 1977: Post, February 27, 1978.

<sup>41</sup> On Inkatha's relations with township youth see Rand Daily Mail, December 24, 1977: The Star, January 30, 1978: The Star, June 26, 1978. Inkatha has in fact established its

own youth brigade which is regarded as a vital component of the movement. See S. Benghu, "The Role of Inkatha and the Youth in the Black Liberation Struggle in South Africa," Address to the Youth Brigade conference, Ulundi, February 11, 1978.

<sup>42</sup> The Sullivan Code is the major set of guidelines governing United States multinational corporate investment in South Africa.

<sup>43</sup> Post, November 11, 1979.

<sup>44</sup> Post, September 17, 1978; Post, February 25, 1979.

<sup>45</sup> On the Black Alliance and its internal relations see Rand Daily Mail, March 9, 1978 and Rand Daily Mail, August 22, 1978.

<sup>46</sup> On Buthelezi as a person and as politician, see Ben Temkin, Gatsha Buthelezi: Zulu Statesman (Cape Town: Purnell and Sons, 1976).

<sup>47</sup> The Star, November 2, 1979. Given the problems of eliciting political information in the townships it is extremely difficult to precisely estimate the support enjoyed by Buthelezi and Inkatha in Soweto. According to a survey conducted by the Arnold Bergstrasse Institute during 1978, it was estimated that the Zulu chief enjoyed the support of 43.8% of the urban black population, that 40.3% of his supporters in Soweto were non-Zulu and that a quarter of the African National Congress supporters in the area also approved of Inkatha. This led this particular



analysis to conclude that Inkatha "represents the strongest organized political tendency among urban blacks." Rand Daily Mail, June 12, 1978.

<sup>48</sup> Rand Daily Mail, April 26, 1978.

<sup>49</sup> Rand Daily Mail, June 3, 1979.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid: Rand Daily Mail, October 8, 1978: The Star, June 30, 1978.

<sup>51</sup> Rand Daily Mail, April 26, 1978.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>54</sup> According to statements issued by AZAPO, the body aims to "conscientize, politicize and mobilize black workers through the philosophy of black consciousness," and "to work towards the unity of the oppressed for the just distribution of wealth and power to all people of Azania." Post, October 1, 1979. The publicity secretary of AZAPO, George Wauchope, is also secretary to the Committee of Ten executive of the SCA.

<sup>55</sup> The main aims of this body are to abolish ethnic schools in the urban areas, downgrade the powers of the local administration boards, step up the process by which their power is transferred to the community councils and, generally, to integrate the councils in their bargaining with white governmental authority. The Star, October 11, 1978. The Nationalists have thus far refused to recognize the association in a formal capacity. Post, October 12, 1978.

<sup>56</sup> Wayne Cornelius, "The Impact of Governmental Performance

on Political Attitudes and Behavior," in Francine Rabinovitz and Felicity M. Trueblood (eds.), Latin American Urban Research, Vol III (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1974).

<sup>57</sup> On the highly conspiratorial flavor of Inkatha-ANC contacts see Sunday Times (Johannesburg), November 4, 1979; The Star, November 8, 1979; Rand Daily Mail, November 28, 1979. A Useful analysis of Inkatha-ANC relations appears in Post, November 11, 1979.

<sup>58</sup> Results of the Arnold Bergstrasse Institute survey. Rand Daily Mail, October 8, 1979.

<sup>59</sup> K.E.M. Lindenburg, "The Effect of Negative Sanctions on Politicization Among Lower Class Sectors in Santiago, Chile, and Lima, Peru," Unpublished dissertation, University of Oregon, 1970.

<sup>60</sup> Buthelezi has argued that the Zulu flavor of Inkatha is part of conscious policy to avoid governmental proscription under the Prohibition of Political Interferences Act. See Rand Daily Mail, April 26, 1978.

<sup>61</sup> See, inter alia, Bryan Roberts, "Politics in a Neighborhood of Guatemala City," Sociology, 2. May 1968; Bryan Roberts, "The Social Organization of Low Income Families," in Richard N. Adams (ed.), Crucifixion by Power (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970); J.C. Mitchell, "Theoretical Orientations in African Urban Studies," in Michael Banton (ed.), The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966).

<sup>62</sup> On the notion of "residual ruralism" see Jorge Giusti

"Organizational Characteristics of the Latin American Marginal Settler," International Journal of Politics, 1. 1978, p. 8.

<sup>63</sup> This is particularly true on issues of housing, and community law enforcement. See The Star, May 22, 1977: Post, June 11, 1978: Post, April 15, 1979: Rand Daily Mail, August 29, 1979: Rand Daily Mail, September 17, 1979.

<sup>64</sup> One of the more ambitious projects to promote the urban renewal of Soweto is the so-called Ecoplan. This, most commentators feel, is unlikely to be implemented in the absence of more positive government support. Rand Daily Mail, March 26, 1979.

<sup>65</sup> Frankel, ibid: Post, April 15, 1979.

<sup>66</sup> Frankel, ibid.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, David Collier, "Squatter Settlement Formation: The Politics of Cooption in Peru," Unpublished dissertation, University of Chicago, 1971: Susan Eckstein, The Poverty of Revolution: The State and the Urban Poor in Mexico (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

<sup>68</sup> On the so-called "total strategy", particularly the role of private enterprise, see Post, September 2, 1979 and Rand Daily Mail, October 23, 1979.

<sup>69</sup> The Star, September 13, 1978: Rand Daily Mail, March 15, 1979.

<sup>70</sup> The Star, March 6, 1979: The Star, September 1, 1979.

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, C.S. Whitaker, The Politics of Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria, 1946-66.

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

<sup>72</sup> Dr. Motland himself has pointed to the similarities between the "blueprint" and white establishment thinking. Rand Daily Mail, September 28, 1979.

<sup>73</sup> Natal Mercury (Durban), August 18, 1975: See also N.E. Bengu, ibid and Buthelezi, "The South African Free Capitalist System.....ibid."

<sup>74</sup> Rand Daily Mail, September 28, 1979: Post, May 6 1979: Sunday Times, October 7, 1979.

<sup>75</sup> On this point see James. C. Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in South-East Asia," American Political Science Review, 65 (March 1972), pp 91-113.

<sup>76</sup> Post, June 11, 1978; The Star, April 18, 1978.

<sup>77</sup> On its part the Nationalist government is not unaware of the role of Inkatha in maintaining peace in Natal during 1976, or of Buthelezi's demonstrated ability to function as an intermediary in urban township conflicts.

<sup>78</sup> Popular enthusiasm for community organizations in poverty settings tends to decline proportionate to organizational goals being met. This means that organizations among the poor have to always articulate newer and wider demands in order to ensure their self-perpetuation. See Alejandro Portes, "Rationality in the Slum: An Essay in Interpretative Sociology," Comparative Studies in Society and History, 14(3) June 1972.

<sup>79</sup> Black consciousness has been widely criticized from both right and left as a middle-class elitist philosophy. The

formation of AZAPO with its strong socialist commitments, is important as an attempt to root black consciousness on a more populist working-class foundation.

CHAPTER IV

THE DYNAMICS OF RESISTANCE:

THE 1976 STUDENT REBELLION

I INTRODUCTION: THE 'CHILDREN'S REBELLION'

South African blacks have never fully acquiesced in the denial of their basic social rights and human dignities in their own land. The result is that their history, unlike that of white South Africa with its connotations of "advancing civilization on a Dark Continent" is overwhelmingly dominated by resistance themes, all ultimately directed against repeated efforts on the part of a white minority to establish and extend and institutionalize racial discrimination and minority privilege. Makana's revolt against the penetrating waves of white colonialism into the Eastern Cape, the subsequent Kaffir and Zulu Wars between the indigenous tribes and the British authorities, the Bambata rebellion, Bulhoek and the successive anti-pass campaigns of the present century culminating in Sharpeville are deeply etched instances in this process of struggle.

In 1976 however, a series of racial disturbances of a scale and intensity unsurpassed in recent South African experience occurred. Since then, the pattern of black-white race relations, normally fragile and tinged with suspicion at best, has eroded further and polarization along color lines has assumed a new reality. This erosion is taking place, ironically, at the very time when the white elite appears to display an historically unprecedented concern with treating the worst of black social grievances, (if not necessarily at the expense of surrendering its monopoly of power). On the international front, the

1976 riots have contributed to a crystallizing of world condemnation of apartheid, probably more intense than after Sharpeville sixteen years previously. The names of various black townships Soweto, above all, have been imprinted on the global conscience to harden international resolve to terminate South Africa's apartheid system.

Of Soweto's estimated population of one and a quarter million, 52 per cent are under twenty five years of age and 170 thousand were schoolchildren in 1976. Thirty six thousand of these are in secondary school institutions.<sup>1</sup> By virtue of sheer weight, if not necessarily by choice, the young of the townships are influential in community politics. This was borne out in 1976 when it was the young, often very young but particularly students of secondary and primary school age, who were at the very epicenter of important political events. The earliest victims of the June riots were students. Hector Petersen, a thirteen year-old schoolboy killed by the police at Orlando West Junior Secondary School on June 16th, and since glorified as a martyr of black liberation, was the first fatality. Students composed a significant proportion of the hundreds of blacks brought to jails, hospitals and mortuaries in the subsequent days and months.<sup>2</sup> Their organizational arm, the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC), emerged as the focal point of community resistance for most of the sixteen-month Soweto rebellion. In fact, in large part the Soweto uprising was one of schoolchildren ranging from their pre-teens in some cases to their mid-twenties in others.<sup>3</sup> Sympathy for the children deepened the tragic quality of events, if not for local whites shielded from township developments by their own racial prejudices and selective media reporting, then at least for international opinion. Much of the global revulsion at what occurred stemmed not simply from the known violence of apartheid, but

from the violence of apartheid perpetrated at mere children.

There can be little doubt that the courage displayed by Soweto's youth has become a source of inspiration for the various forces pressing for change in South Africa, white and black domestically, the more radical and moderate overseas. All have capitalized politically on the events of 1976. Yet student action did not revolutionize South African politics in 1976. The students instigated and maintained a black revolt of relatively long duration, and this revolt had a capacity to extend outwards from Soweto to embrace dozens of other black communities. But, for reasons that need to be explored, they failed to shake apartheid at its foundation. The SSRC was able to keep Soweto itself in a state of tension for well over a year. Yet, as one commentator has succinctly put it, "June 1976, like Sharpeville sixteen years before was (ultimately) another turning point when South Africa did not turn."<sup>4</sup>

Apartheid thus remains basically intact. But the student rebellion is still important in the analytical sense that the successes and failures the students experienced as political actors displays in microcosm the constraints under which all Sowetons labor in offering resistance to the present discriminatory system.

The political role of the SSRC in 1976/77 is inherently interesting, but it is even more deeply significant in providing clues to the wider question of Sowetons building and deploying their political resources to remedy the social ills of their deprived community. In this sense we consider the dramatic events of 1976/77, the tactics adopted by the students over this oft-tragic period, the legacy of their action for present community and national politics, and perhaps most important of all, the implications of the student experience for future political resistance on the part of blacks in general and Sowetons in particular.<sup>5</sup>



## II 1976 IN THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

Speaking of the townships four days after the June 16th riots, Hlaku Rachidi, president of the since-banned Black Peoples Convention enthusiastically stated - "Soweto as it was . . . is no more".<sup>6</sup> What exactly did the SSRC achieve during its relatively short existence during 1976/77, what indicators does its experience provide for the politics of protest under apartheid, and what do these suggest for the political future of Soweto and the broader South African system?

In the first place, the 1976 riots have produced important changes in the political culture of the townships. These changes are by their very nature obscure and difficult to measure, but 1976 indicated to township-dwellers and a wider audience that the spirit of black resistance is resilient despite decades of repression. If nothing else, the events of 1976/77 demonstrated that it is possible to mobilize Sowetons for political action and to inspire commitments to political change. In popularizing black consciousness and in breaking down the belief held by many blacks that the present system will produce change through its own initiatives, the SSRC has played an important role in integrating opposition to apartheid in the townships. The activism of the students during 1976 and their capacity to organize political campaigns of the sort and scale directed against the Urban Bantu Council and the West Rand Administration Board has also contributed towards a redefinition of authority relationships in both the state and the local black family.<sup>7</sup> With regard to the state, the students have gone far towards breaking down the pervasive feelings of deference and hopelessness felt by many Sowetons in the face of the potent instruments of apartheid. Within the family milieu, student determination has produced a mixture of awe and fear of the township youth. Today, the cues for political action often

flow from the youth to their parents rather than in the reverse direction.

Student action during 1976 has also produced a number of more tangible structural consequences salient to the political future of Soweto, other urban black townships and that of South Africa as a whole. In Soweto itself, the SSRC has stimulated further political and quasi-political organization in the form of the Teacher Action Committee and the Black Parents Association. Nthahto Motlana's Committee of Ten, "the most widely representative body to emerge in Soweto in years,"<sup>8</sup> and the more recently formed Azanian Peoples Organization (AZAPO), both derive their existence, political philosophy, and in the case of AZAPO, part of their membership, from the student body. Older groupings such as the African National Congress, its rival PAC and Inkatha remain important to the local scene: yet the appearance of these new organizations linked to black consciousness doctrines and embracing a wide variety of township church, welfare and social institutions has produced new patterns of competition and influence in communal politics. The students, reorganized under the Soweto Students League (SSL), the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and the Azanian Students Organization (AZASO), continue to command substantial political influence despite the banning of their main organizational arm the SSRC, even if not apparently to the extent of the most acute days of the 1976/77 political crisis. There are very few township political organizations which today risk taking decisions without some consideration of the values and interests of the student body.

The disturbances of 1976 are estimated to have affected at least one hundred and sixty black communities other than Soweto.<sup>9</sup> Within a week of June 16th violence had spread throughout the Transvaal, into the Orange Free State, the Cape Province and Northern

Natal. This wave attested to the importance of demonstration effects in South African civil disturbances. One immediate result was the formation of organizations taking the SSRC as a prototype and appropriately called "students representative councils" in a number of black communities along the Witwatersrand and further afield in the Eastern Cape, particularly Port Elizabeth, and the Cape Peninsular. None of these bodies had acquired the degree of local influence enjoyed by their father organization in Soweto. Yet neither have they been banned, the October 1977 crackdown on black consciousness movements, having referred to the Soweto student body in particular.<sup>10</sup> Should these SSRC's remain free of government repression they could conceivably emerge as important foci for political organization in the eventuality of future disturbances.

The violent events of 1976/77 have also politicized and radicalized untold numbers of Soweton youth. There are some important differences of perception and strategy between the new black consciousness espoused by most of the students and the values and tactics endorsed by the Pan African and African Nationalist Congresses. Nevertheless, opportunities have undoubtedly been created for the in-recruitment of young Sowetons now and in the immediate future. Many of the Soweto students who fled South Africa during 1976/77 did not undoubtedly do so because of deep-seated political convictions. Many moving into refugee camps in Swaziland or Botswana certainly did so to avoid the wave of arbitrary arrests following the first riots, many others because of their desire to resume or improve their education. Yet, by the end of 1976 it was estimated that several hundred Soweton students had already fled into exile for one reason or another.<sup>11</sup> It can be conjectured that a significant proportion of this number have since joined the expatriate movements. Soweto 1976

has infused the underground liberation with vigorous new blood.

The student rebellion of 1976 has also encouraged a re-estimation by the white elite of the urgency of social and political change. Within the business community where the fetters of apartheid on production and profit have been criticized for many years, and even in the ruling National Party there are some indications of a growing sensitivity to the risks of maintaining the existing system of discrimination. South African politics has recently displayed a distinct reformist trend in both rhetoric and (less so) practice. As early as July 1976, the authorities waived the Afrikaans language decree which had directly stimulated the riots. In November new measures to improve the quality of black education were announced including the election of all schoolboard members, the establishment of state-financed adult education centers and the extension of the state's textbook supply program. Allocations for black education in "white" areas have increased by roughly a third in each of the annual national budgets since 1976.<sup>12</sup> Salary discrepancies between black and white teachers have been reduced and compulsory if not free education has been introduced on a multiple regional basis. As if aware that the Soweto riots were only partially motivated by educational issues, the government announced its intention to establish a series of community councils in black urban areas in October 1976. With substantially wider powers than the Urban Bantu Council, a Soweto community council - the Soweto Council - has since been brought into existence.<sup>13</sup> Legislation has also been promulgated for a ninety-nine year leasehold system designed to meet urban black demands for land-ownership in the metropolitan areas.<sup>14</sup>

There are at the same time enormous inconsistencies between the promises of change articulated by South Africa's white leaders and the

actual pace of change measured in the substantive terms of public policy to date. Most of the post-1976 reforms, as Nationalist critics point out, are no more than minor readjustments. They bear little relation to the intensity or content of the grievances displayed by Sowetons (and blacks in general) during the course of the riots. Thus, the Soweto Council, which remains to be armed with real administrative and executive resources, mainly shifts responsibility for the development of the townships away from the hard-pressed local bantu administration board. Similarly, the basic features of the bantu education system remain pristine under government claims to improve black schooling and training: these improvements are basically technical and stem largely from changes in labour patterns, particularly increased demand for skilled black manpower by the national economy, of the 193 secondary schools erected for blacks in 1977, only 18 were in "white" urban areas.<sup>15</sup> This suggests that the cardinal separatist principles of apartheid have not been challenged. The major issue of local and national politics, the incorporation of urban blacks into the central political systems, remains untreated. The National Party remains unwaveringly committed to the notion that black political rights are inseparable from citizenship in the rural "homelands",<sup>16</sup> even while displaying considerable ingenuity as to what constitutes "citizenship". In some ways, the events of 1976 have actually consolidated white <sup>hardened</sup> obduracy. In certain circles the pointers are towards rapid change, but in the white center and right the inability of the students and their supporters to challenge apartheid at its roots has been taken to reaffirm the efficacy of elite control. In practice, civil liberties have further eroded since 1976. Influx control in the urban areas has intensified.<sup>17</sup> There have been no noteworthy attempts by government to enter into meaningful dialogue with

the main representatives of black consciousness.

The case can be made that apartheid has moved in the direction of more systematic and extensive control, at least in part as a result of the student rebellion of 1976. It is not at all apparent that South Africa is moving in the direction of a more open society if one considers carefully what has transpired in the course of the last five years. Caution should also be exercised with regard to changes which have taken place within the urban black community. Soweto is different in its psychologies and internal political dynamics from the townships prior to the riots, but the extent of this difference remains an open question. Feelings of hopelessness and political subservience have undoubtedly been shattered, but the intensity and range of the forces of politicization remains a matter of contention. Even within the relatively activist student body political fervor has declined significantly over the last four years. The student boycott of the schools has faded into history, although tentative and unsuccessful attempts have since been made to review it. Most of the township educational institutions again function despite the fact that many pupils have not returned to their regular school activities, either because they have despaired of the educational system, gone into exile over the Republic's borders, or moved to more tranquil schools in the country areas.<sup>18</sup> In any event, the "exodus of the graduates", as one commentator succinctly describes it, is bound to have negative implications for future township leadership.<sup>19</sup>

The events of 1976 also demonstrated to Sowetons the enormity of force available to the authorities in inhibiting radical political action. Today most Sowetons are deeply aware, possibly more than ever before, of the costs and risks of "illegitimate" political participation. This awareness is an important disincentive to

political mobilization even though police brutality probably ensured the political alienation of many previously moderate members of the township community. In addition, while many community organizations such as the Soweto African Traders Association, the Witwatersrand Taxi Owners Association and the Shebeen Owners Association complied to the best of their ability to bring their members into line with student boycott calls during the disturbances the majority of Soweto's small traders, taxi-drivers and shebeen-owners have been sensitized to the impact of community violence on immediate, daily, personal, material interests. There are, on the whole, few individuals in the townships who are not deeply apprehensive at the thought of even greater governmental retaliation in the eventuality of a future uprising. The use of the South African military is seen as a fearful possibility. If it is correct that black urban revolt in South Africa is at least in part a function of perceptions that the authorities cannot maintain order,<sup>20</sup> then the events of 1976/77 may have curiously depressed the spirit of township protest.

### III RESISTANCE POLITICS: THE CONSTRAINTS

The widely-expressed view that the events of 1976 shook South Africa to its foundations does not tally with the basic facts. This being the case, the question arises as to why the SSRC experienced such difficulty in extending its activities to seriously challenge apartheid under circumstances of unprecedented violence and seemingly widespread popular commitment. More broadly, what does the SSRC experience reveal as to the capacity of Soweto to function as a focal point of black resistance? Alternatively, what are the nature of the constraints built into the township environment inhibiting Sowetons from forcefully and effectively mobilizing power to back their political claims?

Inasmuch as the student rebellion provides some answers to these questions, the values and political style of the student body are an important set of considerations. In this regard it is important to emphasize that irrespective of the depth of hostility felt towards bantu education, resentment in itself was insufficient to structure action to destroy the educational system, least of all to encourage organized as opposed to random, improvised and ultimately futile action for wider political change. The bantu education issue was important in holding student leaders and followers together, yet without a coherent plan to bring about the destruction of the educational system, (and it was clear by the beginning of 1977 that such a plan did not exist), the full weight of student numbers could not be mobilized behind the protest movement. Without planning, vertical and horizontal communication in the student body was always discontinuous and in many instances virtually non-existent. Directives issued by the SSRC were, as already noted, often confused and inconsistent, and apart from odd individual initiatives, very little in the way of any sort of concerted effort seems to have been made to link the Soweto student protest with other student protests in Atteridgeville, Katlehong, Mamelodi and nearby Witwatersrand townships. The SSRC executive was often ahead of its constituents in militancy or behind them in moderacy, and its ranks were wide open to provocateurs and self-styled leaders whose "official" pronouncements added to the prevailing confusion. In the circumstances the whole campaign was sooner or later bound to disintegrate despite its heroic proportions.

Soweto in 1976/77 confirms the dictum that bravery is no substitute for organization in political confrontations. At the same time the question remains as to why the students experienced such difficulty in



coordinating their protest and as to why they approached the entire situation with an attitude sometimes bordering on random abandon. Part of the answer is to be found in the social disorganization of Johannesburg's sprawling black townships with their virtually non-existent lines of internal communication. Without the contact points provided by telephones, readily available transport to convey men and messages over wide areas of space and adequate street-lighting to facilitate night movement, the township students found themselves isolated into pockets cleaved from each other by police lines backed by radio, armor and other sophisticated forms of riot control technology. Ultimately the students found themselves on the horns of an irresolvable tactical contradiction where to congregate in school classrooms was the only means to ensure communication but where to do so most exposed them to arrest and police action.

In these terms the imbalance of technologies between Sowetons and the authorities is a serious constraint on mass political action. What exacerbated organizational problems even more however was the fact that the cues to student action were provided by the doctrines of black consciousness disseminated among black churchmen, university intellectuals and ultimately township students in the early seventies, none of which provided practical guidelines to political action.<sup>21</sup> Black consciousness, it should be emphasized, performed the positive function of intellectually crystallizing the critiques of the principles of bantu education prior to 1976, and in June of that year, extending them into a condemnation of the entire political system. Black consciousness also channelled the anger of the youth and provided outlets for their political education in such organizations as the South African Students Movement (SASM) and the more widely-known South African Students Organization (SASO) which emerged as a counterpoint

to the white-led National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) in the segregated black universities. By 1976 both SASH and SASO had extended their recruitment campaigns in Soweto - Mashinini himself was an office-bearer in the former - and during the subsequent disturbances there was apparently close contact between the SSRC and the other two organizations. At the same time black consciousness failed abysmally in 1976 in the sense of connecting ideas to tactics to form a set of strategies and counter-strategies of actual use and relevance to the concrete resistance of both young and old township-dwellers. In part this oversight derived from the fact that supporters of black consciousness do not seem to have anticipated a rising of the dimensions which subsequently occurred: in part the absence of contingency plans reflected the penchant of black consciousness for propagating philosophical abstractions, "conscientization" and psycho-cultural redemption at the expense of operationalizable notions of political behavior. In the last analysis, black consciousness armed young blacks with ideas and a spirit of determination i.e. the necessary but not sufficient qualities for effective participation in the real crucible of political confrontation.<sup>22</sup>

There can be little doubt that the SSRC enjoyed widespread legitimacy in the townships, both because of their resistance to the white authorities, their courage and the extent of their fatalities. It has, for example, been estimated that tens of thousands of Sowetons participated directly in student campaigns, and student actions on increased rentals, and their so-called "aid movement" to assist families who had suffered during the disturbance with parcels of groceries, endeared them to many sections of the community. Yet, despite the fact that the students were, according to some sources, the de facto government of Soweto for much of 1976 and 1977, and for

all the reverence and authority enjoyed by the SSRC which enabled it to periodically mobilize the townships for strike and boycott action, the student organization experienced recurrent difficulty in forging workable and sustained political alliances with other power blocs in the community - some in fact more representative of the broad interests of the township masses than the students were themselves. Why was this the case?

In the first place, while the SSRC tangentially identified with the broad problems of the community they seldom did so with the sense of conviction necessary to convince the populace of the townships that their underlying purpose was to realize objectives other than those held dear by the students themselves. This is not to deny that the student revolt was at least partially "a revolt not only against specific manifestations of policy, but apartheid in all its manifestations".<sup>23</sup> Student pamphlets carried demands for the abolition of the homelands policy, increased wages for workers and lower transport costs: similarly, the July 1977 decision of SASM annual congress to call on all workers to participate in the liberation struggle indicates a distinctive desire of the SSRC, many of whose members were also members of SASM, to widen its involvement from education into other issues affecting the broader Soweto community. The rent boycott of April/May 1977 and the campaign against the Urban Bantu Council also fall into this category. At the same time the basic rationale for the SSRC's existence lay in the last analysis in educational demand-making, its imperatives were set by struggles in the schools, and in many ways its forays into the wider issues of passes, wages, the right to organize and strike were designed to mobilize community support for more limited and closely felt educational issues. The major aim of the SSRC, constantly reiterated by its

mainstream and essentially moderate leadership was, in the words of one president, Trofomo Somo to "see bantu education go to hell", and much of what the SSRC did, in the form of boycotts and strikes designed to penetrate to the heart of the white economy were not seen as ends in themselves, but as means to more limited ends such as the reform of education or the freedom of detained students. Yet bantu education was, as has been noted, only a single factor in the catalogue of grievances prompting the disturbances, and as the more radical minority in the SSRC was inclined to point out, a narrow perspective of this nature could only produce cleavage between the students and other key segments of the community - the unschooled black youth, migrant labor in the hostels and the local work force - with limited to no interest in such esoteric issues as the establishment of a universal and integrated school system, alterations in syllabi, improvements in pupil-teacher ratios and the creation of student-parent school committees.

On the whole, the SSRC failed to accurately reflect the interest of other township constituencies. When more parochial student interests happened to coincide with the wider political and economic interests of township-dwellers, the foundations for collaborative action were called into existence, but when they did not, or did so partially, as was often the situation, the basis for joint action rapidly evaporated. In part this situation reflects a certain lack of political sophistication on the part of SSRC's young leadership, but, more fundamentally, the basic "under-politicization" of the SSRC was due to the fact that to "go political" beyond the narrow legitimated boundaries for black participation set by apartheid is to invite speedy and harsh governmental repression. In a fashion mirroring South Africa's authoritarian climate, black protest in

urban "white" South Africa must be couched in non-political or highly abstract political terms if it is to ensure its own survival. This explains why the SSRC throughout its existence was torn between the need to challenge apartheid in all its dimensions, and thereby enlarge its constituency and by its need to remain protectively reticent about its political aims beyond those of an interest group involved in the "simple" educational concerns of relevance to the narrow student community. In actuality, it basically opted for the less risky latter course. Yet even then, this artificial attempt to remove black education from its political context failed to shield the students from the authorities - and then at the added expense of having precluded them from disseminating the wider programs of political change necessary for capturing the attention and commitment of the wider township masses. It is, in short, not simply the use of force which stifles the political mobilization and organization of South Africa's black population, that of Soweto included: rather it is the putative use of force discouraging the public working out the political logic of issues. This tends to encourage organizations such as the SSRC to self-protectively enmesh themselves in the "non-political" to the point where they eventually define themselves out of the black public consciousness.

There can be little doubt that this peculiar self-imposed process of political exclusion served to inhibit the forging of deep-rooted and working political coalitions between the students and the rest of the Soweto community. Yet it is also important that the student body was drawn, in the words of one commentator, "from a generation better educated than its predecessors, more politically aware and more willing to grapple with the social issues".<sup>24</sup> There is some hard if limited data of the "who-riots" type pointing to positive correlations

between political activism on the part of Soweton youth, urban birth, education and length of urban residence.<sup>25</sup> A variety of commentators have also noted the ambiguous nature of authority relationships within most urban black South African families. Hellman, for example, has pointed to the difficulty experienced by many Soweton parents in projecting authority on an inter-generational basis under the demeaning conditions of apartheid and the deep antagonisms between generations with the older widely condemned for its fatalistic resignation to second-class citizenship.<sup>26</sup> Just prior to 1976 it is significant that a Soweto Parents Association was formed to improve relations across generational boundaries. Yet the basic conflicts over parental control remained unresolved and were to prove salient for the political relations between Soweton youth and their elders during the course of the disturbances, when many of the older generation found themselves caught between admiration for their offspring and a sneaking anxiety that what was at stake was a veiled rebellion against established codes of family organization and parental authority. To the extent that the white authorities were able to play upon these sensitive nerve-endings to project the student movement as a threat to traditional notions of parental control they were able to cut into support for the students among many segments of the older generation. Certain student actions such as the campaign against increased township rents during May 1977 blunted this counter-offensive, the formation of the Black Parents Association - on which both SASM and SASO were represented - was an important contact point between generations, while the violence perpetrated on their children ultimately swung the majority of parents against the authorities. Yet for the duration of the rebellion many parents, many of whom could not in turn overcome years of conditioned subservience and even went so far as to form vigilante

groups to inhibit student boycotts, were ambiguous towards the notion of the SSRC as political spokesmen for the Soweto community.

From the student point of view parental support was important, and during the second, third and fourth stay-away campaigns the SSRC took considerable care to formulate issues in a fashion they believed compatible with the interests of the older generation. From the point of view of the success of the uprising as a whole however, student political relations with two other major power foci in the townships, namely the migrant laborers and the permanent work force, were absolutely crucial.<sup>27</sup>

The precise ratio of migrants to urban-born inhabitants in Soweto is actually unknown, yet in South Africa as a whole the number of black migrant workers has grown faster relative to the economical active black population. In 1970 one in three black workers in South Africa were migrants,<sup>28</sup> and it can be assumed that Soweto's population composition replicates these patterns. At the same time, the specific circumstances preconditional to poor migrant labor being mobilized and radicalized for political purposes are largely absent in the township environment.<sup>29</sup> In the first place, it is apartheid policy to favor migratory over urban-based labor in the white metropolises and this means that the Soweton migrant receives little encouragement from the authorities to remain in the townships for any period beyond that necessary minimum dictated by local manpower requirements. In accord with the decades-old policy that the black city migrant is only there to 'minister to the white man's needs', migrant life in Soweto is often harsh, arduous and subject to constant surveillance by the authorities, particularly in the case of Soweto's 45 thousand migrants housed in government hostels.<sup>30</sup> Government policy is on the whole designed to discourage migrants developing close

associations with the cities - the social facilities provided are kept to a bare minimum - and the pass laws are rigidly applied to ensure that labor recruited from sources outside the official bureaux system does not enter or stay in the urban area. Since migrants can never acquire Section 10 rights enabling them to be legally recognized city-dwellers, they can be "endorsed out" of the townships for any conceivable reason, least of all political involvement, and in so doing prejudice their chances of readmission in the future.<sup>31</sup>

Government policy worked through influx control thereby acts as a serious disincentive to migrant political participation. In the case of "illegal" migrants the need to keep a low profile from the police is an added incentive to steer clear of publicly visible political action.

These considerations were of considerable importance in defining migrant commitment to the student cause during 1976/77. In addition however, irrespective of official policy, most migrants arrive in Soweto on a seasonal, cyclical or target basis consistent with urban movement patterns in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>32</sup> This means that most of the townships' migrant sub-community has little to no motivation to assimilate into the urban network, except where necessary for physical and psychological survival. Much as other short-term city-dwellers in other African settings, they tend to measure their presence in the area by the accumulation of instrumental material values independent of matters of political control and change.<sup>33</sup> Most maintain rural ties and interests, which produce very different patterns of demand, perception and behavior than Soweto's otherwise highly Westernized population, and see very little point in investing precious time and energy in community affairs.<sup>34</sup> In general, these temporary Sowetons are insensitive to the political issues and interests of concern to



the more stable township population.<sup>35</sup> Since these depoliticizing characteristics also spill over to embrace significant numbers of long-term yet relatively new migrants who are preoccupied with finding suitable employment, housing and circles of friends, the category of individuals imperfectly integrated into the township environment, limited in commitment to community politics, and normally impervious to the types of appeals articulated by the students during 1976, is considerably wider.

The pattern of migrant movement from the countryside to Soweto is also by and large not that of the step-type variety found in relatively more industrialized societies, the effect of which is to gradually accustom migrants to urban norms and values in a fashion assisting their assimilation into society upon their eventual arrival in the city. Migrants into Soweto also move into an ethnically heterogeneous environment and this means that for most of them the transition into fast-paced and impersonal urban life is abrupt, traumatic and favorable to the more acute forms of social disorganization associated with the life-styles of new city-dwellers. These stresses are particularly pertinent in the case of "illegal" entrants into the townships who are faced with an existence dominated by state harassment Kafkaesque in its quality and proportions, but are also salient for the inhabitants of the townships' enormous, anonymous and harshly uncomfortable hostels. Social disorganization is generally more prevalent among migrants who are single, male and temporary,<sup>36</sup> and in Soweto, migrants recruited through the labor bureaux are obliged to leave their wives in the rural areas under influx control regulations. This results not only in a situation where politically demobilizing social and moral degeneration is encouraged in the single-sex hostels, but also to tension between migrants and indigenes as the

former turn to local women for sex and companionship.

Unlike many Latin American and Asian situations where new city-dwellers find themselves thrust into "communities of strangers" with whom they only tangentially identify,<sup>37</sup> the new migrant into Soweto moves with reasonable ease into compatible home-place and ethnic networks composed of friends, close relatives and members of the extended family already in the city. Most aspects of the new migrants' life in Soweto, finding work, housing and daily sociability, are supported by this framework which cushions the transition into urban society, yet works to reinforce ethnic criteria for identification and association. The general rigors of urban life under apartheid tend to encourage this process, the result being that class or racial consciousness does not readily emerge as a source of political action for the local migrant community.<sup>38</sup> Migrants can be mobilized from the outside for a variety of purposes,<sup>39</sup> yet in Soweto, precisely because of the centrality of the ethnic network, migrants are most receptive to external political appeals couched in ethnic terms and organized around traditional leadership, styles and symbols. Poor migrants generally favor personal, paternalistic and even the authoritarian qualities of most forms of traditional leadership,<sup>40</sup> and in the Johannesburg townships this transference of rural leadership role expectations and patterns of followership into the urban area is assisted by the cyclical nature of most rural-urban movement.

In conformity with universal patterns, the majority of migrants into Soweto are also relatively young<sup>41</sup>, and this is important in the light of the fact that older migrants are usually more easily integrated into the politically participant in urban communities. Soweton migrants are also relatively less educated than their urban counterparts, once again in line with universal patterns, partially because of the

infrequency of step-movement migration with its tendency to raise the skills of potential city-dwellers, but also because the cyclical pattern of movement into the townships encourages less positive selection of rural migrants in the first place.<sup>42</sup> This educational differential inhibits fluid social assimilation, and given the importance of education in defining the type and range of work available to the new city-dweller, it means migrants moving into the cheaper categories of labor, where they come to be seen as a threat by low status and unskilled Sowetons particularly during times of rising unemployment - such as during 1976. This element of competition is normally aggravated by the unwillingness of most white employers to upgrade the competence of their temporary migrant labor, (who can simply never qualify for permanent employment under Section 10 provisions), and by their general preference for migrants who are seen at once as both more dispensable and manipulable.

Progressive urbanization, recurrent cyclical migration with its tendency to blur rural-urban differences, and racial affinities act to politicize the migrant to some degree and blunt the conflicts between him and resident Sowetons. This, plus the sheer frustration experienced by the single migrant hostel-dwellers in all probability accounts for the modicum of attenuated cooperation emerging between students and migrants in 1976, particularly during the third September stay-away. In general however the relations between students and migrants, (and between indigene Sowetons and migrants more generally), displayed many adversary features, leading to not only benign hostility but actual confrontation on occasions. Thus in August 1976, following reports that students were molesting migrants refusing to comply with the prevailing stay-away at Mzimhlope Station, residents of the nearby hostel went on the rampage through Meadowlands and Orlando

killing some seventy Sowetons. This incident in which local homes were broek into and their inhabitants raped, robbed and murdered was a spectacular but by no means extraordinary expression of migrant-indigene tensions. (Thus in the Cape Town townships a further 36 people lost their lives in similar clashes the following December). It is also significant that on this occasion there is some evidence that the police actually encouraged migrants to attack students, certain accusations going so far as to suggest that the authorities provided the attackers with both weapons and marijuana. Although these charges have been denied, they point to the fact that the points of tension between migrants and resident Sowetons arms government with important instruments to manipulate and fragment the political ranks of the township community. It is also instructive that it took the intervention of Kwazulu chief Gatsha Buthelezi to bring the conflict between the students and Mzimhlope men to termination.<sup>43</sup>

Relations between students and the more permanent members of Soweto's work force were not as adversary as those between students and migrants, and bearing in mind the painful economic deprivation of Soweto's population, the local proletariat responded favourably to the strike and boycott campaigns - although the extent to which they were motivated by fear, parent-sibling solidarity or passive acquiescence rather than deep-seated political commitment remains an open question.<sup>44</sup> Certainly, Soweto's workers did not go so far as to assist the police arrest students as was the case in the Durban townships.<sup>45</sup> It is however significant that while black workers have stood in the forefront of political movements during the past, in Kadalie's Industrial and Commercial Workers Union in the twenties and in the South African Congress of Trade Unions after 1954,<sup>46</sup> they did not on this occasion actually initiate the various strike campaigns which, irrespective of their

initial success, eventually petered out with the students increasingly unable to elicit worker participation.

This passivity on the part of Soweto's work force during 1976 can be partially blamed on the students themselves, particularly on their already-noted failure to politicize bantu education sufficiently to accurately mirror the wider interests of the township population. At the same time it is important to take into account that Soweto's working class, much as South Africa's black proletariat as a whole, is relatively undifferentiated at low levels of wages, skills and status.<sup>47</sup> This is basically the result of institutionalized economic discrimination embodied in such instruments as the Mines and Works Act, the Factories and Shops and Offices Acts, with their effect of reserving the more specialized and high-grade occupational categories for white labor. Employer practice and white labor protectionist strategies organized around the so-called "conventional color bar" have also played a major role in confining black workers to low skill roles with all their negative implications for political activism, radicalism and the development of higher and more revolutionary forms of worker consciousness.

Factory employment can, depending on the work situation, be conducive to radicalization and the existence of a large modern manufacturing complex in the Johannesburg area drawing on Soweton labor can counteract these factors associated with low differentiation.<sup>48</sup> Class consciousness may not even be necessary for class action if popular perceptions of exploitation are present.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, because labor power is one of the few points of leverage available to blacks,<sup>50</sup> their industrial organization has always been strictly controlled by the white authorities. Fear of black unions was one of the reasons for the Suppression of Communism Act of 1951,<sup>51</sup>

and local labor history is replete with examples of legislation designed to eliminate black unions, (the Physical Planning Act, the Bantu Affairs Administration Act, the Bantu Workers Act of 1953, the Employment Bureaux Registration Act of 1972),<sup>52</sup> or, as has become the fashion more recently with acceptance of the reality of black unions, attempts to coopt them into the white union structure.<sup>53</sup> So-called "parallel unions" such as the National Union of Clothing Workers have been able to exploit legal loopholes to partially represent black workers, at least at the "bread and butter" level necessary to avoid government repression, yet the development of autonomous and activist black unions has been seriously impaired. Thus, in 1976, black union organization in Soweto and the rest of the Johannesburg area was minimal,<sup>54</sup> and what few unions existed along the Reef outside of the townships, most of which were factory-based to begin with, made absolutely no attempt to contact the student organization.<sup>55</sup> Black consciousness with its elitist overtones has not in any case made inroads into the working class, and "the bulk of the small African trade union movement does not seem to regard itself as part of the black consciousness movement" in the same sense as the Soweto students.<sup>56</sup>

Working class political involvement in Soweto during 1976 must also be seen against the background of the compound system with its ability to isolate certain key elements of labor, (the mine-workers in particular), the high proportion of migrants in the local labor force who are not a stable field for transethnic unionization,<sup>57</sup> police power with its capacity to encourage a cautious economism on the part of the few black unions, and the very basic poverty of the townships which discourages action where jobs might be put at risk. This last factor is given added weight as a political disincentive by the fact that under the influx control regulations to be unemployed in Soweto

can lead to an individual being "endorsed out" of the urban area, be he contract labor or a Section 10 black whose urban privileges are subject to "good conduct" while in the city.

The coincidence of race and class is a latent force for the mobilization of black workers, if only because it inhibits the development of a black "labor aristocracy",<sup>58</sup> and since 1976 there have been some changes in the situation of Soweto's workers conducive to translating this coincidence into concrete categories of political action. These include the explicit policy of new organizations such as AZAPO to broaden the constituency for black consciousness by impregnating workers with its ethics, the formation of a growing number of black unions working independent of white tutelage,<sup>59</sup> government recognition of certain types of black unions in accord with the principles of the Wiehahn Commission, and the elimination of most forms of job reservation as the economy demands more skilled manpower. Yet, most of these changes are ex post facto 1976 and were either absent or incipient during the riots. Similarly, while there is evidence of a new black worker assertiveness dating as far back as the 1973 Natal strikes, much of this was not yet in evidence in Soweto three years later then workers did not stand at the head of black resistance and were characteristically cautious in their reactions. Economically deprived workers tend to surmount the constraints on their political mobilization only when faced with specific and harmful government initiatives directly linked to their instrumental material interests, or when it is widely believed that action will produce immediate benefits.<sup>60</sup> Neither of these critical preconditions was widely in evidence in Soweto during 1976, and the result was that although worker commitment to the SSRC was occasionally massive, it was seldom fired with enough enthusiasm, frequency and

continuity to forge the deep-rooted student-worker political alliance necessary to the SSRC bringing the full weight of the townships against bantu education and apartheid.

In these circumstances, while the student movement enjoyed legitimacy in the townships, it constantly experienced difficulty in translating its authority into an enduring political coalition wholly or partially composed of students, parents and permanent or migrant workers. Authority patterns in Soweto families, the logic of migrant existence in the community, and the relative pacifism of the local working class, all conspired against the realization of this critical objective. In addition, as elements in the student body became frustrated in their attempts at persuasive coalition-building and violated SSRC directives to enforce compliance with strikes and boycotts, the latent tensions in student-community relations became direct antagonisms to shake the legitimacy of the student body. Evidence of workers and migrants being molested by students dates as far back as the very first stay-away of August 1976,<sup>61</sup> although the use of intimidation over the entire campaign was largely isolated. Nevertheless, incidents of intimidation provided the authorities with the means to capitalize on the theme of the students as simple "tsotsis" (i.e. young gangsters), or as egotistic and rebellious children with little concern for the wider interests of the community. It is an open question to what extent this succeeded in penetrating the consciousness of most Sowetons, but that it did so to some degree is an indisputable fact.

Problems of organization and political coalition-building in Soweto's multifarious environment took their toll on the momentum of the student campaign, yet the inability of the SSRC to project power effectively was thirdly and finally a reflection of the limited range



of strategies available to Sowetons in their role as antagonists of apartheid.

In the first instance, the SSRC's experience throws into bold relief the political viability of peaceful mass demonstrations in the current South African climate. For the most part, barring old individual cases of sabotage, the burning of public buildings and punitive actions to enforce non-collaboration, the SSRC was firmly rooted in the pacifist tradition of black nationalism and throughout its existence it displayed a marked preference for peaceful over violent modes of public demonstration.<sup>62</sup> Thus the Council disclaimed responsibility for the wave of pamphlets urging racial confrontation which swept the townships during October 1976, and its leadership was continually torn between perpetuating the school boycott with all its potential for violence and persuading scholars to return peacefully to their classes with all its implications of surrender to the authorities. In part this preference for non-violence reflects the moderacy of black consciousness; in part the legacy of earlier protest movements. In either case the students made the fatal error of valuing moral suasion over brute force as a factor in South African politics. It has been pointed out that passive demonstrations lean heavily on the democratic conscience of the state,<sup>63</sup> yet it is far from self-evident that the state in this instance felt itself bound in its responses by either conscience or moral appeal. Were this the case, the street confrontations between blacks and police would not have assumedly been so costly in black lives. It is also a moot point whether student actions seriously disturbed the ethical sensibilities of most whites, reinforced as they are by racial prejudice, the tendency of the media to cater to whites values and interests and by social and residential segregation between the races.

During the disturbances the geographic distinctiveness of Soweto not only allowed the police to seal the townships in the interests of control, but also to insulate whites from any real or extended exposure to the ongoing situation. With the exception of the police themselves, the white elite had only an indirect and partial experience of the events of 1976, barring the inconveniences caused by the stay-away campaigns and the student marches into Johannesburg. Both of these measures were at least in part designed to sensitize white Johannesburg to black grievances and to "carry" Soweto to the adjacent city. In actuality, these events so horrified white city-dwellers, (the successful student march into Johannesburg in particular), that their characteristic response was to demand greater police vigilance rather than government concessions.

This suggests that peaceful mass demonstrations by Sowetons are not only difficult to project across physical and psychological racial boundaries: they can, more dangerously, have the very reverse of the effects intended. At the same time the SSRC experience points to the drawbacks of political violence and mass confrontation as a means for Sowetons to alleviate their situation. There are certain factors in township make-up which pose problems of riot control and are conducive to mass violence as a political technique: these include Soweto's wide streets and low-rise buildings.<sup>64</sup> Yet the maldistribution of the resources of violence between the white authorities and local blacks is so enormous that without carefully articulated organization, (as the student experience tragically demonstrated), confrontation has the simple affect of heightening the visibility of township activists to assist the authorities in their elimination. The entire history of the SSRC is dominated by a pattern where leaders arise out of street confrontations and are almost immediately arrested or

politically immobilized in some other manner. In this fashion the SSRC's executive was constantly creamed of its leadership potential, (of its five chairmen, two were arrested and the rest forced to flee the country before they could consolidate their positions), and by early 1977 the Council was forced to admit publicly that it was not fully functional. By this date the police had in any case instituted a veritable reign of terror. From October 1976 house-to-house sweep-and-search operations became the order of the day and hundreds of young township-dwellers were either forced out of the community or arrested with impunity. In this exercise the geographic distinctiveness of Soweto was again important for it allowed the police to cordon off the area thereby isolating their opponents and stifling political initiatives at the outset.

The SSRC experience finally points to the many problematic features of what might be called "the politics of withdrawal" i.e. of political action defined by boycotts, stay-aways and other forms of anti-collaboration designed to deprive apartheid of its actual or potential black manpower resources. Whatever else the SSRC achieved through the use of these political techniques, they ultimately failed in this final objective, and although the reasons for this are to be found partially in the disorganization and demographic complexity of the townships, they ultimately lie in the single fact that apartheid draws much of its strength not from simple coercion and police control, but from white economic hegemony, urban black poverty, and the consequent ability of the white elite to exchange often minor material benefits for political compliance, or to withhold these benefits in the event of black opposition.

It should be emphasized that practically everyone in Soweto lives either dangerously close or below the local poverty line, and this

means that political choices are always mediated by the pure and simple material requirements of daily subsistence. In the townships there is no shortage of individuals and groups who are sensitive to the actual or potential incentives attached to political quiescence, and even among the students the appeals of politically-motivated school boycotts are carefully balanced and broadly offset by the fact that education, even bantu education, is an important source of status and mobility in the community. At the end of 1976, for example, only six thousand of seventy thousand students due to sit for country-wide matriculation and junior certificate examinations failed to do so, Soweto and Cape Town's black townships accounting for most of the shortfall.<sup>65</sup> In Soweto itself, the allegiance given by students to the SSRC did not prevent their ranks opening and closing on the school boycott, particularly with the onset of examination periods. The question of participation in the February 1977 examination produced deep conflict within the SSRC, between it and the students and in student ranks themselves, and ultimately the boycott was an abysmal failure with instances of Council members being driven away from the schools by students solely interested in continuing their studies.<sup>66</sup>

The interface between poverty and political participation is obviously even more acute on the part of the older generation who as breadwinners of Soweto's impoverished families are deeply sensitive to the personal economic costs of long-term commitments to policies of non-collaboration. All, particularly those with employment and large families, have immediate stakes in the normal functioning of the system independent of how unjust or discriminatory it might be seen to be,<sup>67</sup> and while the SSRC campaign was a source of admiration it was also a source of considerable strain as the imperatives of work, wages

and food were matched against the niceties of political change and abstract justice. In practice, SSRC strike and boycott calls provoked considerable dissatisfaction among shebeen-owners ordered to stop selling illicit liquor, professional soccer players dependent on fixtures for their livelihood, and Soweto's 1,600 small shop-keepers and traders. The football players, interestingly enough, tended to wax more enthusiastic for SSRC boycotts on sport at the end of the professional league season, but in both their case and that of the traders the SSRC was forced to accede to pleas that support of their cause would produce enormous material hardships for the individuals involved.<sup>68</sup> In the case of the shebeens, the students were obliged to approach the relatively affluent bootleggers in order to enforce boycotts on drinking at the source of supply. The Shebeen Owners Association expressed its support for the SSRC but even then many shebeens continued to trade with stockpiled liquor in defiance of both the students and their own association. Despite their hostility to bantu education, many of the student's own teachers were also ambiguous in support of their pupils in a situation where black civil service positions are hard to come by.

In the last analysis, decisions on political participation in Soweto are made from a standpoint of poverty where the state of the economy, the capacity of the white elite to resist economic blackmail and the rudimentary nature of political organization in the townships are all influential. If urban black unemployment and inflation were backdrop causes to the disturbances they also functioned to stifle them. By late 1976, Johannesburg industry and commerce had adopted a hard line on the issue of work absenteeism. Already by the time of the September stay-away there were reports of black workers being fired, and of even the more sympathetic white employers refusing to tolerate the disruption accompanying what were already fast becoming more

imperfect and partial strike actions. In the townships themselves, political disorganization inhibited efforts to ameliorate the hardships imposed by non-collaboration - as it will doubtlessly do for the foreseeable future. Ultimately the students registered their greatest successes in campaigns where sensitive material interests were not threatened, the campaigns against increased rentals and the Urban Bantu Council being cases in point. In alternative circumstances, where non-collaboration could be tantamount to starvation, all of the reserves of courage mustered by Sowetons were inadequate to overcome the basic demobilizing logic of their deprived situation.

#### IV TOWARDS THE FUTURE

The students challenged apartheid: they failed to conquer it. Yet Soweto in 1976 and the township's students will inevitably be a reference point for future generations, instilling idealism and confirming political commitments. More specifically, the SSRC-inspired rebellion has generated major structural and cultural changes in the townships. New anti-government organizations have been stimulated and have extended their influence into previously moderate ranks to swell the forces of black resistance, the unwillingness of urban blacks to accept apartheid has been intensified, and perhaps most importantly of all over the long-term, a generation of young blacks, "impatient, radical, militant, brave and proud" according to one commentator,<sup>69</sup> has been forged in the crucible of violent political action.

In a more negative sense however, the SSRC's experience reveals in all their nakedness the enormous problems confronting Sowetons as poor city-dwellers in aggregating power to confront apartheid. These problems include both the development of mobilizing ideologic and the identification of strategies linked to the concrete realities of

the township community and capable of coordinating the political purposes of its major power blocs beyond the necessary but insufficient common denominator that all, are dissatisfied with apartheid. Given the importance of leadership quality in politically mobilizing poor urban communities,<sup>70</sup> this problem of integrating political resolve and resources turns very heavily on the emergence of a deeply-committed, unified and sophisticated leadership cadre in the townships, certainly more competent than that provided by the SSRC during its relatively short existence. Homogenizing aims and capabilities will also have to come to terms with the tendency of social diversity in Soweto to cut across racial affiliation to breed different interests and stakes on the part of workers, students and migrants in both local and national politics.

The complexity of these issues, which mirror the universally recognized problem of moulding the urban poor into an effective political force even when confronted by governments less dogmatic and intractable than the South African,<sup>71</sup> suggests they are unlikely to be resolved in the short-run. If the historic experience is any measure for the future, South Africa's white elites will also do everything in their power to influence the process of township political development, to halt it or steer it into minimally disturbing directions.<sup>72</sup> As far as the liberation movements are concerned, their apparently miniscule participation in the events of 1976, (due largely to their once again being penetrated by the police shortly before,<sup>73</sup>) lends credibility to the view that they are increasingly isolated from the home base, if not in popular sentiments then for practical purposes. These factors are critical given the reliance of poor communities on external actors for political resources in the form of leadership, ideas and organizational skills.

For the foreseeable future the politics of resistance as practiced by Sowetons are likely to conform to one or both of two distinct patterns. In the first place, inasmuch as 1976 seems to have driven the final nail into passive resistance and mass confrontation, resistance will become both more selective and more violent. Since 1976, as exiled young Sowetons return with gun and bomb to challenge the system, there has been a resurgence of urban guerilla warfare on a larger scale than at any time since the mid-sixties which seems to bear out this pattern.<sup>74</sup> In the second place, 1976 obliged both rulers and ruled to look anew at the tactics of the struggle in which they are locked.<sup>75</sup> One consequence as far as the ruled are concerned is that the politics of withdrawal, traditionally organized around boycotts and strikes, may be a political luxury which the poor of Soweto can ill afford. Resistance in the townships is therefore likely to seek out new avenues of non-collaboration either unused or partially confirmed during the 1976 disturbances. With the enormous purchasing power of Soweto, the sensitivity of Johannesburg's central business district to its black clientele and the extension of black business in the townships, consumer action is likely to emerge as an alternative tactical mechanism.<sup>76</sup> Whether it is viable under conditions of poverty and a degree that it compensates for the variety of political constraints inherent in Soweto's situation remains the critical unresolved question.



FOOTNOTES.

<sup>1</sup> John Kane-Berman, Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1978), p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> On the basis of press reports giving the ages of Sowetons killed, admitted to hospital or brought to the courts during the disturbances, some 44 percent were 13 to 16 years old, 49 percent 17 to 23 years old, and 7 percent older than 24. See Kane-Berman, p. 7. According to reports of the South African Institute of Race Relations, nearly two-thirds of the people who died during the riots were under 26 years of age. South African Institute of Race Relations, List of Those Who Died During the Disturbances in Different Parts of the Country in the Latter Half of 1976. (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> The advanced age of Soweton schoolchildren, some in their mid-twenties, is in itself an indication of the quality of the Bantu Education system.

<sup>4</sup> Kane-Berman, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> There have, up to the present, been very few systematic analyses of the events of the period. For a good review of the extant literature, see Frank Molteno, "A Review of the Literature on Events in South Africa, 1976", Social Dynamics, 5 (1) 1979, pp. 54-76.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted from Tom Duff, "Militant Generation," The Star (Johannesburg), September 30, 1977.

<sup>7</sup> Duff, ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Kane-Berman, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Kane-Berman, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> The eighteen black consciousness groups banned under the order of October 19, 1977 were the National Youth Organization, the Association for the Educational and Cultural Advancement of the African People of South Africa, the Black Community Programs, the Black Parents Association, the Black Peoples Convention, the Black Women's Federation, the Border Youth Organization, the Christian Institute, the Eastern Cape Youth Organization, the Medupe Writers Association, the Natal Youth Organization, the South African Students Movement, the Transvaal Youth Organization, the Organization of Black Journalists, the Western Cape Youth Organization, the Zimele Trust Fund and the Soweto Students Representative Council.

<sup>11</sup> See A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1976, p. 81.

<sup>12</sup> Kane-Berman, p. 188.

<sup>13</sup> On the Soweto Council see Philip Frankel, "Municipal Transformation in Soweto: Race, Politics and Maladministration in Black Johannesburg," African Studies Review. XXII. September 1979, pp. 49-63.

<sup>14</sup> Sunday Times (Johannesburg), June 18, 1978.

<sup>15</sup> Department of Education and Training, Annual Report 1977 (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1978), pp. 52-54.

<sup>16</sup> Under P.W. Botha the National Party has moved in the direction of what it terms "dual citizenship" whereby urban blacks will be simultaneously citizens of both South Africa and their respective homelands. This scheme, which is subject to considerable criticism from the white Right, basically because it at least partially extends South African citizenship to the black population, is nevertheless seen as unsatisfactory by the majority of blacks who regard it as a ruse designed to induce them to surrender full South African status.

<sup>17</sup> Philip Frankel, "The Politics of Passes: Control and Change in South Africa," Journal of Modern African Studies, 17, June 1979, pp. 199-217.

<sup>18</sup> In May 1978 the 14,379 students attending the 32 secondary schools in Soweto constituted only slightly more than 40 percent of the student body in secondary schools in the first half of 1976. See Kane-Berman, p. 190.

<sup>19</sup> On this so-called "exodus" see Kane-Berman, pp. 217-229.

<sup>20</sup> See Edward Feit, Urban Revolt in South Africa, 1960-1964 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971).

<sup>21</sup> On the black consciousness movement see, inter alia, Gail M. Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

<sup>22</sup> Kane-Berman, pp. 103-108.

<sup>23</sup> Kane-Berman, p. 47.

<sup>24</sup> Duff, ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Philip Frankel, "Status, Group Consciousness and Political Participation: Black Consciousness in Soweto," Paper presented at conference, The Witwatersrand: Labor, Townships and Patterns of Protest, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, February 3/7, 1978.

<sup>26</sup> See E. Hellmann, Soweto: Johannesburg's African City (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1971); E. Hellmann, "Soweto", Optima, March 1976.

<sup>27</sup> It should be borne in mind that some of the migrant laborers and members of the permanent labor force were also parents in their own right.

<sup>28</sup> Jill Nattrass, "Migrant Labor and South African Economic Development," South African Journal of Economics, March 1976, pp. 66-69.

<sup>29</sup> On radicalism among the migrant and native urban poor, see, inter alia, Charles Tilly, "A Travers le Chaos des Vivantes Cities," in Paul Meadows and Ephraim Mizruchi (eds.), Urbanism, Urbanization and Change (Addison Wesley, Reading, Mass, 1969); Joan Nelson, Access to Power: Politics and the Urban Poor in Developing Nations (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 310; Peter Lupsha, "On Theories of Urban Violence," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, 1968); Glaucio Soares and Robert Hamblin, "Socio-Economic Variables in Voting for

the Radical Left, Chile, 1952," American Political Science Review, 4, December 1967, pp. 1053-65; Myron Weiner, "Urbanization and Political Protest," Civilisations 17 (2) 1967.

<sup>30</sup> On the notion of "ministering to the white man's needs" see M.W. Swanson, "Urban Origins of Separate Development," Race, 10 (July 1968) pp 31-41; T.R.H. Davenport, "The Beginnings of Urban Segregation in South Africa," Occasional Paper, No. 15, Rhodes University, 1971; P.J. Koornhoff, "Urban Bantu Policy", in N. Rhodie (ed.), South African Dialogue: Contrasts in South African Thinking on Basic Race Issues (Johannesburg: McGraw Hill, 1972) pp. 315-35; Paul Rich, "Ministering to the White Man's Needs: The Development of Urban Segregation in South Africa, 1913-23," Paper presented at conference, The Witwatersrand: Labor, Townships and Patterns of Protest, *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> On Section 10 rights under the influx control laws, see Philip Frankel, "The Politics of Passes...." *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> These patterns of movement are basically different to those found in Latin America and East Asia where urban migrants tend to leave the countryside permanently. On these issues, see Bertram Hutchinson, "Industrialization and Social Movements: Comments on a Paper by Alain Touraine," in Anthony Leeds (ed.), Social Structure, Stratification and Mobility (Pan-American Union, Studies and Monographs, No. 8, Washington D.C. 1967); Harley Browning and Waltraut Feindt, "The Social and Economic Context of Migration in Monterrey, Mexico," in Francine Rabinovitz and Felicity

Trueblood (eds.), Latin American Urban Research (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1971): J. Clyde Mitchell, "Urbanization, Detribalization, Stabilization and Urban Commitment in Southern Africa," in Meadows and Mizruchi, ibid: Robert Bates, Rural Responses to Industrialization: A Study of Village Zambia (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1976): Richard H. Sabot, Urban Migration in Tanzania (Economic Research Bureau of the University of Dar es Salaam, Vol. 2. National Urban Mobility, Employment and Income Survey of Tanzania, 1972).

<sup>33</sup> Pauline Baker, Urbanization and Political Change The Politics of Lagos, 1917-67 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) provides an analogous study.

<sup>34</sup> Philip Mayer, "Class, Status and Ethnicity as Perceived by Johannesburg Africans," in Leonard Thompson and Jeffrey Butler (eds.), Change in Contemporary South Africa (Berkeley; University of California Press, 1975) p. 144.

<sup>35</sup> Many short-term migrants tend to remain active in homeplace politics, keeping abreast of events in villages and even returning home to participate on crucial issues. See R. Descloîtres, C. Descloîtres and J. Reverdy, "Organisation Urbaine et Structures Sociales en Algeria," Civilisations. 12(2) 1962.

<sup>36</sup> Aidan W. Southall and P.C.W. Gutkind, Townsmen in the Making: Kampala and its Suburbs (Kampala: East African Institute for Social Research, East African Studies, No. 9.

1957). For a general review of the literature linking urban migration to the degeneration of the migrant, see Morton and Lucia White, The Intellectual Versus the City: Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

<sup>37</sup> See Bryan Roberts, Organizing Strangers (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973).

<sup>38</sup> On the problems facing the development of class consciousness among poor rural migrants to cities, see, inter alia, Gino Germani, "Social and Political Consequences of Mobility," in Neil Smelser and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.) Social Structure and Mobility in Economic Development (Chicago: Aldine, 1966); Fernando Cardoso, "Le Proletariat Brasilien," Sociologie du Travail 3 (4) October/December 1961.

<sup>39</sup> See, inter alia, Robert Fried, "Urbanization and Italian Politics," Journal of Politics 29 (3) August 1976.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Bamberger, "A Problem of Political Integration in Latin America: The Barrios of Venezuela," International Affairs 44 (4) October 1968; Wayne A. Cornelius, "A Structural Analysis of Urban Cachismo," Urban Anthropology 1 (2) Fall, 1978; Irving L. Horowitz, "Electoral Politics, Urbanization and Social Development in Latin America," Urban Affairs Quarterly, 2, March 1967; Alastair Hennessy, "Latin America," in Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (eds.), Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969).

<sup>41</sup> Nelson, p. 59.

<sup>42</sup> Nelson, p. 88. On the general relationship between migration, education and urban assimilation, see K.C. Zachariah, "Bombay Migration Study: A Political Analysis of Migration to an Asian Metropolis," Demography, 3 (2), 1968; Alden Speers, Jnr, "Urbanization and Migration in Taiwan," Economic Development and Cultural Change, 22 (2) January 1974; William L. Parish, Jnr, "Urban Assimilation in Developing Societies: The Taiwan Case and a General Model," Unpublished paper, 1972.

<sup>43</sup> Kane-Berman, p. 113.

<sup>44</sup> Kane-Berman, p. 117.

<sup>45</sup> Kane-Berman, p. 106.

<sup>46</sup> On the ICWU see Sheridan Johns, "Trade Union Pressure Group or Mass Movement: The Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa," in Robert Rotberg and Ali Mazrui (eds.), Protest and Power in Black Africa. (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>47</sup> L. Douwes Dekker, D. Hemson, J.S. Kane-Berman, J. Lever and L. Schlemmer, "Case Studies in African Labor Action in South Africa and Namibia," in Richard Sandbrook and Robin Cohen (eds.), The Development of an African Working Class; Studies in Class Formation and Action (London: Longman, 1975) pp. 207-238.

<sup>48</sup> See Maurice Zeitlin, Revolutionary Politics and the Cuban Working Class (Princeton: Princeton University



Press, 1967) p. 180 et seq; Ergun Ozbudun, Social Change and Political Participation in Turkey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 212 et seq; David Lockwood, "The New Working Class," European Journal of Sociology, 1 (1960):

<sup>49</sup> Nelson, p. 162.

<sup>50</sup> See Heribert Adam, Modernizing Racial Domination (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 153; F.A. Johnstone, "White Prosperity and White Supremacy in South Africa Today," African Affairs, 69 (275) 1970; M.C. O'Dowd, The Stages of Economic Growth and the Future of South Africa (Johannesburg: n.d.); R.A. and H.J. Simons, Class and Color in South Africa, 1850-1950 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 625 especially.

<sup>51</sup> Dekker et al, p. 212.

<sup>52</sup> See Muriel Horrell, Legislation and Race Relations (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1966); South African Institute of Race Relations, Supplement to Legislation and Race Relations, *ibid*, 1974.

<sup>53</sup> On the issue of cooption as a means of political control in contemporary South Africa, see Philip Frankel, "Consensus, Consociation and Cooption in South African Politics," Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, 80. XX-4. pp. 473-494.

<sup>54</sup> Kane Berman, p. 117.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Kane Berman, p. 106.

57 On the issue of mobilizing and unionizing migrant workers, see Alain Touraine, "Industrialisation et Conscience Ouvriere a Sao Paulo," Sociologie du Travail, 3 (4) October/December 1961.

58 On the "labor aristocracy" issue in Africa, see Adrian Pearce, "The Lagos Proletariat: Labor Aristocrats or Populist Militants," in Sandbrook and Cohen, *ibid*, pp. 281-302; John Saul, "The Labor Aristocracy Thesis Reconsidered" *ibid*, pp. 303-310.

59 Financial Mail (Johannesburg), November 19, 1976.

60 Nelson, pp. 389 and 392.

61 Kane-Berman, p. 113.

62 On passive resistance as a means of black struggle in South Africa, see Leo Kuper, Passive Resistance in South Africa (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

63 John Berger, "The Nature of Mass Demonstrations," in Berger, Selected Essays and Articles (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).

64 See Bob Hitchcock, Flashpoint South Africa (David Nelson: Cape Town, 1977). p. 190.

65 Kane-Berman, p. 150.

66 Kane-Berman, p. 137.

67 Counter-Information Services, ibid.

68 Kane-Berman, p. 120.

69 Financial Mail (Johannesburg), September 19, 1976.

70 Nelson, p. 261 et seq,

71 Nelson, p. 393.

72 See Frankel, "Consensus, Consociation.....", ibid.

73 See Callinicos and Rogers, ibid.

74 Sunday Post (Johannesburg), May 4, 1980.

75 Molteno, p. 75.

76 The use of consumer action has been advocated by Chief Buthelezi of Kwazulu in particular; he apparently regards it as an integral part of his "multi-strategy" approach to combatting apartheid. See Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg) April 4, 1980.

## CHAPTER 5

### PURCHASING THE POOR:

#### WELFARE AS POLITICAL CONTROL

##### I POVERTY, WELFARE AND POLITICS

Urban poverty is a major source of stress in developing societies where a good proportion of bureaucratic time and energy is devoted to devising plans to manage, or at least to ameliorate, the often intractable problems of hyperurbanization.<sup>1</sup> Political leadership is, naturally enough, also involved with these issues because massive urbanization also constitutes an incipient threat to public order and stability in direct proportion to the absence of social services at the centers of systems. The resulting responses often carry coercive overtones such as squatment bulldozing and re-transporting their inhabitants to rural areas. Normally, to an extent defined by the sensitivity of authorities to the inefficacy of dealing with over-urbanization by simple repression, it is possible to identify more sophisticated and realistic reactions in the form of manipulating the instrumental demand patterns motivated by the imperatives of daily survival in most poor communities. This manipulation involves the distribution of welfare and tangible rewards defined by the practical needs of poor city communities. The purpose is either to side-track inhabitants away from the basic inequalities of the political system, or, more positively, to build supports for it by suggesting the material advantages of its continuation. Extended medical and educational services, distributions of free food, the

creation of subsidized bodies offering essential goods at low prices, government assistance to consumer cooperatives, the development of mass housing projects and upgraded water, electrical and transport facilities - all fall under the category of stuff of which the politics of welfare are made.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter analyzes the interconnections between politics and welfare in Soweto under the particular conditions posed by South Africa's apartheid policies. Its focal point is the manipulation by government of material rewards linked to the imperatives of subsistence as a means for the political control of Johannesburg's black poor. Government action is explored both diachronically and synchronically. The first sub-section conforms most closely to the former mode of explanation. It analyzes the manner in which Johannesburg's local authorities have sought to meet the social pressures produced by black urbanization and the related cultural, administrative and economic constraints which have traditionally inhibited their ability to treat basic demands for social services emanating from the townships in a fashion compatible with the goal of positively influencing black attitudes towards the political system. In 1971, the Nationalist government transferred Johannesburg's city council's administrative functions to a centrally-controlled West Rand Administration Board (WRAB). The second section deals with the experiences of this body in building a service network in the townships prior to the 1976 riots. It puts particular emphasis on the continuities binding the efforts of the board and its municipal predecessor in manufacturing black political orientations. Since 1976, the Nationalist authorities have moved, more systematically than ever before, to bending welfare to political purposes. This second section is also concerned with the repertoire of strategies designed to compensate for the difficulties confronting

WRAB in carrying out this important facet of government policy. In the concluding section we attempt to evaluate the prospects of counter-revolution in the light of the extant literature on the relationship between welfare and political action on the part of poor urban communities.

## II WELFARE AND CONTROL IN SOWETO: THE ROLE OF THE JOHANNESBURG CITY COUNCIL

The growth of Johannesburg is synonymous with that of South Africa's gold mining industry. The expansion of the metropolitan area from a ramshackle collection of huts to one of the continent's major urban concentrations attests to the impact of quickly accumulated wealth on patterns of human movement. This is particularly true of the city's early white community, the prospectors, adventurers, and later the purveyors of capital and mining technology. The imminent possibility of riches compensated them for the rigors of existence in the early days of the Witwatersrand. A similar attraction through affluence also partially explains the historic drift of blacks to "N'goli" (the city of gold). The opening of the gold reefs in 1884 in fact soon brought unprecedented wealth to much of white South Africa, but not to the legions of black labor directly responsible for extraction. Gold nevertheless set off a process of black urbanization.<sup>3</sup> By 1896, approximately half of the fledgling town's population were blacks seeking refuge in mine wage labor from growing poverty in the country areas. By 1913, with rural dispossession aggravated by the Natives Land Act, the momentum could no longer be reversed.<sup>4</sup> Twelve years after the striking of the first successful claims, Johannesburg's population of 102,000 was roughly divided between black and white.<sup>5</sup> A mere

eighty years later, despite the barriers to black urban influx institutionalized by successive white governments, the racial distribution of population was of the order of three to one in favor of blacks.<sup>6</sup>

For almost all of the city's history, the white members of the Johannesburg City Council have been vested with broad "responsibility" for the local black population, controlling black entry into the urban area, allocating blacks in the labor market and providing them with basic social services.<sup>7</sup> During the first 30 years of the town's history, municipal officials were largely inactive in treating the multiple administrative and social problems generated by the progressive influx of blacks.<sup>8</sup> The growing numbers of these new migrants were, in the words of one commentator, "never considered as part of the human population" of what was then little more than a robust mining camp. On the rare occasions when official reports drew attention to the human attributes and pitiful social plight of the local black group responsibility was either shifted to the mining houses (their main source of employment) or to the central government vested with a "special concern" for urban blacks by legislation embodied in the Act of Union.<sup>9</sup> Between 1894 and 1918, urban black policy was essentially a matter of neglect. Then, a massive influenza epidemic broke out in the squalid black area of Kliptown, coincident, as it happened, with numerous complaints by white ratepayers that their employees were being housed too far from their point of employment in the city. It was this peculiar combination, a public health threat and employer demands, that finally galvanized the fathers of the town into some action. A decision was subsequently taken to establish a Western Native Township somewhat closer to the town center.<sup>10</sup> Following the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923 which obliged municipalities

to provide housing and other social services for urban blacks, a local department of "native" affairs was established as an adjunct to the parks and estates committee. Shortly thereafter, in 1931, the first steps were taken to develop what was seen as a model township at Orlando.<sup>11</sup> With changes in the immigration pattern from black individuals to families during World War II and with political disturbances during 1944-47 in the poorer black squatter areas the council's housing program was further extended.<sup>12</sup> By 1970, this had resulted in the construction of over 65,000 units and a complementary network of educational and medical facilities.<sup>13</sup>

In terms of scale the council's development effort is quite impressive: latter day visitors to the complex of townships making up Soweto are often astounded by its enormity in relation to similar projects designed to cope with urbanization in other parts of Africa. On the other hand, inasmuch as administrative systems are judged by criteria of environmental quality, equity or by the simple delivery of public resources to points where they are most needed, then the Johannesburg experiment in black city government is far from an unqualified success. For the most part the previous shanty towns have been replaced. But the social facilities available to the excess of one million Sowetons are grossly inadequate to meet even the most basic of their human needs. The housing and school shortage is monumental, and most services found in viable communities are almost absent.<sup>14</sup> The townships of Soweto also display many features of gross urban pathology in their endless rows of uniform 47-square meter houses, the unlighted, treeless and unpaved streets, and their rudimentary social outlets.<sup>15</sup> Poverty combines with monotony in a lethal environment ridden by all conceivable forms of crime, a high alcoholism rate and other widespread indications of profound social



disorganization.<sup>16</sup> Anything positive to be said about the community must also be juxtaposed against the fact that the townships' service grid is quantitatively and qualitatively grossly inferior to that of affluent "white" Johannesburg a few short miles away. If there is a case for the violent political working out of notions of relative deprivation in contemporary South Africa it lies precisely in this extraordinary material differential between the racially segmented parts of Johannesburg.

Over the decades the Johannesburg municipality has attracted many reasonably competent administrative officials and from time to time its Department of Native Affairs, (later re-named the Department of Non-European Affairs), has made sincere, if paternalistic efforts to assist the development of the local black community. The contradiction between intention and results, between what the more development-minded would have liked to have seen in the townships and what has subsequently occurred does not arise from the overloading of the administrative system by accelerated black urbanization, as some local officials prefer to believe. Rather it is to be found in the fact that the policies of the council and the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB) reflects a political and cultural atmosphere that constrains the effective working of administrative arrangements.

Johannesburg's urban policy has never been able to break free of the racial forces determining the working of South African society. The values of the local administrative system and its tactics have always depended on decisions made by whites for blacks in order to protect the hegemonic interests of the minority. Psychologically the council never entirely laid to rest the notorious doctrine of the Stallard Commission that blacks are temporary sojourners in white

urban areas, and superfluous except insofar as they minister to the needs of the regional economy.<sup>17</sup> The emphasis has indeed shifted as the irreversibility of black urban migration is increasingly understood. But grudging acceptance of the permanency of urban blacks failed to breakdown the control connotations of the Stallardist conception of black policy. To the very day of its replacement by WRAB, council activities were dominated by the view that black municipal governance is more a matter of regulating the black community than of stimulating its social development.

Policy in this context could rarely be "sold" in the council unless it was linked in rhetoric and practice to the imperatives of order and control. As this frustrated local liberals they tended to leave the workings of the municipality to "pragmatic" and generally more conservative elements. As a result, controversial initiatives for township development were pushed aside. As the council defined its role in control terms, it became a passive instrument for enforcing segregationist policy. In so doing, it destroyed all possibilities for an effective dialogue with the black community. In these circumstances all of its efforts to build support in the townships and to distance itself from the apartheid policies of the Nationalist Party after 1948 were quite fruitless.

A situation of immobilism and ruptured communication was further complicated historically by the dependence of the council on the political and financial resources of its racially exclusive white constituency. Local whites, as landlords, building unions and industrial and commercial interests always adapted black policy to their narrow communal concerns. They also insisted that black development be self-financing even to the point of serious cutbacks in badly-needed facilities and social services.<sup>18</sup> In practice,

capital investment in SOWETO's service grid flowed from a number of sources - from the council's monopoly over the sale of liquor in the townships (accorded legal recognition by the 1923 act), from housing rates and rentals, limited levies on local employees of black labor and sporadic loans from the central government and private sources including the city's mining houses. Over the years, as council programs expanded in an inflationary atmosphere, these sources proved hopelessly inadequate. Adverse annual balances complemented the separation of the so-called "Bantu Revenue Account" from general revenues. At the same time, Johannesburg's white population steadfastly resisted the idea of being taxed to finance improvements in the black sector. They refused to sanction significant transfers from general municipal revenue to the "bantus" account. To some extent this denial of responsibility reflected the Stallard doctrine with its emphasis on the temporary nature of the urban black: to some extent it reflected a deeply rooted South African administrative tradition. Thus myth combined with the self-balancing philosophy to plunge the council's black program into progressively mounting debt.<sup>19</sup>

Central government has done little to alleviate the council's plight. Its policy of financial disbursements to local authorities has been informed by the ideal, dating back to 1910, that the brunt of the burden of black urbanization be borne locally. At the same time the setting of policy was reserved at high government levels. Insofar as this distribution of responsibilities has been enshrined in such legislative instruments as the 1918 Urban Areas Bill and the 1923 act the central government remains the ultimate arbiter in matters concerning urban blacks while the local authorities provide the funds to support their social development.<sup>20</sup> Obviously this placed the council squarely on the horns of a dilemma: it has on the one hand been unable to rely on material assistance from the center nor, on the

other hand, has it proved able to mobilize substantial funds from local sources except at the risk of offending white interests and sensibilities. The net result is that the Soweton poor have assumed the responsibility for their own social expansion. Under council auspices, Soweto has received what it has been able to pay for in the form of rates, rentals and liquor sales. Bearing in mind the pervasive penury of the community and the absence of a tax base as a result of restrictions on land ownership by urban blacks, this has not amounted to much.

The central government has also maintained a tight rein on the actual operations of local authorities, in general and particularly in regard to its involvement with the black population. In the course of the last 30 years the centralism of administrative philosophy, explicit in the Act of Union, the 1923 Native Urban Areas Act and the Bantu Urban Areas Consolidation Act (1945) has increasingly become a drift towards authoritarianism, uniformity and bureaucratic state control. This has been especially evident in Johannesburg's administrative experience. Center-periphery relations have been cross cut by conflicts of political interest between the Afrikaner national government on the one hand and the English-oriented United Party which has traditionally held control of the city's institutions on the other. It is important not to understate the historic areas of consensus between the two groups. Since 1948 they have showed a common interest in the workings of the race-dominated political economy. At the same time, differences over the technicalities of domination have been important enough to arouse Nationalist suspicion that the Johannesburg council has been subverting apartheid at the local level. Prior to 1971 United Party councillors frequently advocated tempering influx control with humanity. This was interpreted at the center

to mean that Johannesburg's authorities were lax in implementing the pass laws. In 1958, despite protests by the municipality, a commission was appointed by prime minister Verwoerd to examine the application of these laws in the Johannesburg area. When the council subsequently expressed the view that better social welfare in the townships would undercut black political mobilization, the ruling Nationalists responded with the accusation that this was tantamount to recognizing the permanence of the urban black and thereby struck at a central pillar of apartheid. Following the removal of the Diepkloof and Meadowlands sections of Soweto from city council control in 1954 mutual suspicions intensified. Financial assistance from the center, always miniscule, progressively dwindled.<sup>21</sup> In 1961 and 1962, in laws which was widely interpreted as a direct attempt to deplete the already inadequate funds available to the council for township development, all municipalities were required to transmit 80 percent of all monies realised through liquor sales to the central authorities.<sup>22</sup> These funds, now labelled "donations" to the central government, were subsequently ploughed into "homeland" development.

During much of the sixties, in the last years of its role as a mechanism of urban black policy, the council was locked into a political and economic stranglehold. The effect was to reduce black welfare programs to increasingly slimmer levels. By 1971, when the final levelling blow came in the form of the Bantu Affairs Administration Act which totally removed the administration of urban blacks from the local authorities, there was no shortage of scepticism both within the council and outside it as to whether the body could continue to function in a welfare role at all.<sup>23</sup>

### III WELFARE AND CONTROL: WRAB, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The Bantu Affairs Administration Act of 1971 greatly altered the administrative situation in Johannesburg's black townships much as the Native Urban Areas Act had done nearly fifty years before. The earlier 1923 act had essentially shifted the emphasis of policy. But the decision to supplant the Johannesburg city council with the West Rand Bantu Administration Board - known colloquially as WRAB - gave rise to major changes, both in administrative personnel and in the general institutional context of policy-making. These changes, which were widely criticized at the time of their inception, are still a bone of contention in many quarters. Former members of the municipality's non-European affairs department,<sup>24</sup> many officials of the United Municipalities Executive, and members of the white opposition parties did not originally support them, nor do they now, a decade later. There is little in the experience of the Board to vindicate the claims by the central government in 1971 that the new board would bring more rationalized and specialized resources to bear on township problems.<sup>25</sup>

Employers of black labor tended to welcome the 1971 legislation. The geographic jurisdiction of the new board was wider than that of the city authorities. Since blacks are encapsulated in designated areas under the pass laws, the act, it was reasoned, would increase labor mobility, reduce labor turnover and generally allow for a more productive use of the black work force.<sup>26</sup> Yet residents of Soweto tend to be somewhat sanguine in their feelings when questioned recently on the implications of the 1971 legislation. Many echo the view expressed by the white left at the time, that the centralism embodied in the 1971 law represents a further nail in the coffin of South African democracy. Most view the choice between a white board

and municipality as one between the devil and the deep; very few endorse the view that the last nine years of board control have witnessed any significant improvements in the conditions of township existence.<sup>28</sup>

There is much to be said for these negative opinions expressed by the actual members of the Soweto community. However charitable one's observations, the board has, it seems, distinctly failed, both as an administrative unit and as an instrument for the distribution of welfare and the improvement of township social services. In many critical areas WRAB efforts have been sadly lacking. As even more ardent Nationalist Party supporters have been forced to concede in the wake of the 1976 township disturbances, WRAB administration and governance has aggravated the multiple, social, organizational and political problems of formulating and then implementing urban black policy at the local level. The 1976 riots, according to evidence presented to the Cillie commission of inquiry were closely linked to the mode of administration adopted by the board since its inception. The social deterioration of the townships in the five years since has generated numerous suggestions, both inside and outside government circles, that the board be replaced by some alternative administrative mechanism.

The West Rand Administration Board has not measured up to the promises of more effective local government inherent in government rhetoric at the time of its creation and in the years following. From all available evidence, the qualifications of WRAB officials are not superior to those of former members of the municipality's Department of Non-European Affairs. As these earlier officials informally accumulated substantial field experience of the complex and often peculiar problems of Johannesburg's black areas, it becomes

even more difficult to rationalize WRAB's role by specialized skill criteria. The whole board system was hastily brought into existence. Staff was either recruited on a relatively unselective basis or was seconded to Soweto from other black areas where the exigencies of administration differ qualitatively and quantitatively from those posed by South Africa's largest and most volatile urban black concentration.<sup>29</sup> Originally the Department of Bantu Administration intended to compensate partially for shortfalls in personnel through arrangements with older and more established local authorities. The 1971 act provides for the transfer of staff from local authorities to the boards on a voluntary basis. Yet little along these lines has transpired in the Johannesburg case either because of the United Party leanings of many senior local government officials or for the more practical reason that WRAB salaries and side-benefits are generally less attractive than those offered by the Johannesburg municipal apparatus.<sup>30</sup> Under the circumstances WRAB has been forced to operate largely with dubiously qualified personnel with a limited appreciation of local township conditions.

Administrative discontinuities are also aggravated by the tight control exercised over the various administrative boards by central government. Evidence presented to the Cillie Commission, established to investigate the township riots of 1976, has pointed out that there is a very limited range of affairs over which boards enjoy freedom of action. Outside of this range which is composed of basically routine administrative tasks, ministerial clearance is required. In the WRAB case this has seriously impeded communication between the periphery and center of the administrative system. The pattern of center-local relations is essentially one of downward flow imperatives. These stifle administrative initiatives in the field and limit opportunities



for officials at the point of policy application to feedback information on local conditions to the locus of policy formation. If many of the policies applied by the government to Soweto seem redundant, irrelevant or obscure, it is partially because WRAB tends to be ruled by decisions made on the basis of bureaucratic criteria formulated essentially in Pretoria.

The hegemony of the center also affects the quality of communication between the board and the Soweto public. Not only does the image of the board as a direct extension of the Nationalist Party dampen the enthusiasm of many Sowetons about it, but also the system of centralized control limits the direction of officials actually based on the spot in Soweto in the implementation of apartheid policy. In many ways, the "efficient administration" promised by the 1971 act is synonymous with the stringent application of apartheid. Not only has this precluded any black representation on the board, (which remains a racially exclusive institution beyond the clerical level), but it has also led to a far more rigid and inhumane application of the various apartheid laws. Given the fact that the 1971 act was in good part a central government reaction to the apparent ideological deviation of Johannesburg's authorities the present situation in which Sowetons are confronted with the harshest realities of the apartheid system is hardly surprising. Yet this development feeds the accumulating resentments on the part of many Sowetons. It profoundly complicates the task of building system-supporting attitudes in the black community. It contradicts the counsels of political moderation, and from available evidence, it is an important source of protest activity.<sup>31</sup> The boards' offices were among the first targets marked for destruction during the 1976 riots. This does not necessarily mean that the board system is the only element in Soweto's sense of

injustice: rather it indicates that in the opinion of many Sowetons WRAB is the most immediate and tangible symbol of apartheid at its most authoritarian.

If the Bantu Affairs Administration Act gave rise to major alterations in policy mechanisms, much of the philosophy governing their use remained unchanged, particularly in the area of financing. While central government loans were recognized by the act as a potential source of revenue for the boards, this was tempered by provisions in the draft and explanatory memorandum of the act to the effect that it was expected that the various new boards would be economically viable and self-financing. Thus, according to the memorandum, "it is intended that the boards shall in respect of their financial matters be independent and that it shall not be necessary to approach the Treasury for funds."<sup>32</sup> The performance of WRAB would therefore depend on the exploitation of revenue sources at the local level. Since these were the same the displaced municipal authorities used, (i.e. township rates and rentals, employers levies and liquor sales), it was anticipated that the economic position of the board would be no worse than that of its predecessor.

These calculations were basically misfounded because they failed to take into account two factors whose impact was to reduce the money available for urban black policy even below the levels during the period of municipal control. In the first place these calculations ignored the phrases in the 1971 act which "allowed" the boards to make grants to the South African Bantu Trust for use in the development of the rural "homelands". There are few detailed figures as to how much money has been diverted away from the urban areas in this fashion but since the central government has carte blanche to siphon capital from the Bantu Revenue Account, and since it is basic to National Party

policy that the so-called homelands received priority in the allocation of development resources, the amount is likely to be quite substantial. In the second place, the framers of the present administrative system seem to have seriously underestimated the financial significance of the annual transfers of subsidies from general municipal revenue accounts to the Bantu Revenue Account. In the Johannesburg case these subsidies drawn from general municipal funds were never in themselves sufficient to offset the recurrent deficits on the Bantu Revenue Account. Yet they are important contributions which were denied Soweto with the creation of WRAB. Today the board is deprived of an annual potential income of R2.5 million from this source, (estimated on the basis of 1971-72 Johannesburg City Council figures).<sup>33</sup>

As for welfare activities in the townships, the situation under WRAB is infinitely worse. Indeed, the entire history of the board is dominated by its inadequate financial base and subsequent accumulating economic shortfalls. In the fiscal year 1974/75, for example, the board faced a deficit of R3,435,000. By 1977, following the disturbances of the previous year in which many township beerhalls, a major source of board revenue, were destroyed, this deficit had increased to an estimated R17 million.<sup>34</sup>

The growing bankruptcy of the board has, naturally enough, had profoundly negative consequences in recent years when the characteristic social disorganization of township life has been compounded by recurrent political disturbances. On the whole, it has meant a putting aside of development activity in favor of somehow solving WRAB's liquidity problems. Today, WRAB officials are as much concerned with making back-payments on existing housing and other social facilities in the townships as they are with extending and improving Soweto's service grid.<sup>35</sup> Forward and contingency

development planning come up hard against a barrier of inadequate finances to translate proposed projects into operation. Board staff are constantly seeking to cut existing programs in the interests of economy, irrespective of their urgency or importance in relation to the needs of the community.

The perennially critical housing and school shortage in Soweto has progressively worsened in recent years. WRAB statisticians have estimated that about 12,000 families are without any form of housing at present, and board officials concede the seriousness of the situation. But less so than other reliable calculations such as those of the Black Sash which pertinently point out that WRAB calculations exclude families who do not qualify for housing under Influx control regulations and families whose heads no longer list themselves through sheer hopelessness and desperation, have set the figure at over double the official level.<sup>36</sup> In any case, WRAB activities in the area of housing have been meagre while the accumulating crisis has been aggravated by the board's enthusiastically pursued policy of demolishing shanty-type housing in such areas as Alexandra township to the north of Johannesburg. The net effect is to encourage the drift of homeless people into Soweto. During its entire administration the board has also failed to build a single school in the townships.<sup>37</sup> It has drawn up plans for the construction of numerous schools, but not a single one has materialized to date. Education, as 1976 indicated, is a particularly sensitive issue in township life with enormous potential for political expression. Thus even the Department of National Education and Training, (formerly the Department of Bantu Education), has criticized the board for its apparent maladministration.<sup>38</sup>

The board has three basic options under these circumstances. In

the first place, it can present itself as an important element in maintaining township stability and, on this basis, seek charity from Johannesburg whites, either directly or through the city council. However, the majority of the white community, as in the past, resists the idea of using "white" taxpayer's money to finance black township development. Certainly few city councillors would risk endorsing such a policy as an electoral plank. Also the municipality could hardly justify reinstating township subsidies at a time when white local authorities are experiencing financial problems in the absence of significant central government assistance. The fact that the money would be channelled through WRAB, which is widely condemned as an inept tool of the Nationalist Party in the local press, hardly facilitates the situation. There is, in any event, a strong feeling in the community that the 1976 riots were a gross display of black ingratitude in relation to white philanthropic efforts: financial outlays to the townships now, it is argued, could conceivably disappear in future disturbances later.

The second alternative is for the board to tap the financial resources of the black community itself through increasing rates and housing rentals in the townships. Most of the evidence since 1976 suggests that WRAB officials generally prefer this option to that of seeking white Johannesburg's favors. In 1978f township water tariffs were raised by more than 70 percent and in the period 1976-78 housing rentals were increased by over two hundred percent in some cases. In the medium term however it is exceedingly unlikely that the townships<sup>39</sup> can bear the costs of their own development and exceedingly likely that the political costs will outweigh the benefits in coercing them to do so. It has been estimated that the cost of living in the townships is rising by some 30 percent per annum

and given the already pervasive poverty of Soweto's inhabitants the ability of the authorities to extract additional revenue from them has probably already reached its limits. If the past is any indicator of the future WRAB attempts to test these limits is likely to induce widespread political discontent and heighten community resentment directed at both the board and the central government.

The third most viable option for the board lies in attracting financial assistance from the central authorities. Since 1976 there have been indications of shifts from established policy. Thus, following widespread criticism of WRAB's failure to elicit loans to build schools in the townships during 1978, the state, acting under warnings of a repetition of the 1976 educational crisis, assumed direct responsibility for the erection of schools and their subsequent maintenance.<sup>40</sup> During 1977 a state loan of R1.5 million was advanced to WRAB for daily operating expenses. During 1979, the Department of National Education and Training also announced the possibility of free schooling for blacks in a number of regions (although Soweto was not mentioned in particular).<sup>41</sup> In May 1979, in what is widely regarded as one of the clearest government commitments to address the problem of black urban housing, the Minister of Community Development stated that it was the intention of his department to initiate a project to build 41,000 houses at a cost of some R89 million in the foreseeable future.<sup>42</sup>

Despite these developments, 1976 should not be regarded as a watershed in central government attitudes towards financing development in the urban black areas. Nor should the period since be taken as a reversal of traditional administrative practice leaving urban black welfare to local devices. Recent government reactions remain hopelessly inadequate for township social problems. The May 1979 housing proposals are essentially fatuous when measured against estimates by

the recent Riekert Commission that R800 million will be needed to alleviate the housing backlog in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal region over the next five years.<sup>43</sup> In actuality, central government allocations for urban black housing have decreased in recent years.<sup>44</sup> The central authorities moreover have adopted a largely neutral posture on many of the major development projects proposed for Soweto in the wake of the 1976 disturbances. These include the important program to electrify the townships, the estimated R150 million costs of which are borne entirely by a consortium of private banks and financial institutions. It is also significant in evaluating central government as an instrument of welfare in Soweto that it is reluctant to single out this politically and economically crucial area for special treatment and immediate action. Despite the urgings of elements outside government, the proposed housing scheme of 1979 is for "urban black housing" in general, and not Soweto in particular. This has led some WRAB officials privately to complain that central government regards Soweto as already "over-favored" and prefers to pump assistance into other townships with apparently more appreciative populations and less intractable social problems.<sup>45</sup> It is on the grounds of this seeming discrimination against Soweto that these officials interpret the recent refusal of the central authorities to countenance WRAB requests that the 1971 act be amended to institutionalize regular flows of funds from the center to the board. Without these funds, it is estimated correctly, WRAB can neither meet its outstanding debts nor purchase new land for township development.<sup>47</sup>

Despite occasional outbursts of philanthropy in the last few years, central government hesitates to depart from the tradition that it is basically responsible for such social services as exist in the

black areas of the metropolises. Part of this reluctance is attributable to administrative inertia, but, in the last analysis it reflects powerful ideological and political forces which constrain government assisting urban blacks. Many of these constraints are necessarily continuous with the conventional philosophy that black social welfare must be a matter of what blacks themselves can pay for. For central government to pump money into the urban black service grid immediately raises the ideological core question of the transiency of urban blacks. Contending with a watchful and powerful right-wing the National government is cautious in being seen to depart from basic apartheid principle. In addition, central government decisions on the allocation of public funds and energies are today deeply influenced by Nationalist attempts to forge a tri-partite minority political coalition among the white elite and the Indian and Colored communities. In the 1977/78 national allocations for housing, blacks received a mere R8 million in government assistance, against R17 million for Indians and R23 million for Coloreds.<sup>48</sup> This discrimination is repeated in the distributions envisioned under the 1979 housing scheme: blacks receive R69 million, and Indians and Coloreds, who are together a much smaller group with arguably less severe housing problems, R109 million and R393 million respectively. The Nationalist authorities have certainly calculated how to use white money to determine optimal political returns.

Still, the present generation of Nationalist leaders are alert to the political capital to be made from distributing welfare to urban blacks. To some finite degree they are willing to run the political risks of central assistance to the welfare needs of urban black communities. In practice, the upgrading of social services in these communities is used as a means to build political support, but never very visibly. In short, central government can only function



indirectly as an instrument of welfare despite the possibility of gaining more support from blacks.

Nationalist responses to pressures in Soweto have since 1976 moved in three parallel directions. All involve, to varying degrees, farming out welfare responsibilities to surrogates in the urban black community with government support held to a minimum.

In Soweto's case, the Nationalists have moved to reinstitutionalize community politics after the collapse of the Urban Bantu Council. They subsequently created the Soweto Council armed with substantially wider administrative powers than its predecessor.<sup>49</sup> The new body supposedly plugs a dangerous political vacuum in the townships, undercuts criticism that urban blacks are denied political representation, and, perhaps most importantly of all, shifts community welfare responsibility from the white administration board to an elective black body. The government has committed itself to transferring rapidly powers related to local housing and other social services from WRAB to the Council. Government rhetoric refers to the Council as a full municipality in the process of formation. It is however far from evident that the new Council can build political support at all. In the first place, the Council as an eventual sole government institution in the townships belies the tendency of organizations such as WRAB towards self-perpetuation. As a vital arm of government policy in Soweto over the last ten years the board has accumulated considerable leverage in the transformation of the black council from a largely toothless administrative unit into a viable executive entity. In accord with government policy, WRAB is currently training clerical staff to provide a pool of skills upon which the nascent black council can draw. Understandably enough, it has also enthusiastically welcomed the transfer of responsibility for local housing to the black

body. Despite the fact that central government has provided assurances that the allocation of power to the council will be gradual, and that the important function of influx control will remain vested in the board, its bureaucrats are perspicacious enough to appreciate that any increases in council power directly diminish their own status and prerogatives. There have been frequent complaints by members of the black council that WRAB officials are hindering the body's development.<sup>50</sup> Although the central authorities can simply dismiss the board, its officials have already proved politically influential enough to induce the Department of Cooperation and Development to discard a previous five-year timetable for devolving power on the council in favor of an unspecified "period of consultation" to negotiate the power transfer between the Council, WRAB and the central authorities.<sup>51</sup>

The Soweto Council is likely to remain an essentially impotent body for the immediate future. Its role as a welfare-distributing and political support-building entity will not develop. Its ability to build support among the township population is seriously impeded by its links with WRAB, both in community perceptions and administrative practice. Furthermore, the Council is, as usual, backed with inadequate finances. The fact that ninety percent of WRAB's Soweto property was destroyed in the first spasms of the 1976 rioting attests to the depth of popular hostility directed at the board, and as it has enforced influx control and rental evictions more strictly over the last three years, its image has corroded even further. These links between WRAB and the Soweto Council can only militate against the council building popular credibility in a way reminiscent of the process leading to the collapse of the old Urban Bantu Council in 1977.<sup>52</sup> The central government has also forced the black body to depend upon

the small amounts of capital that can be mustered at the local level. In the circumstances it has been forced, as was WRAB, to raise township rates and rentals. Much to the satisfaction of the white authorities, the subsequent resentments and hostilities now attach to a black community body.

The period since 1976 has also seen a growing belief that it is imperative to increase black access to the rewards and opportunities of the local capitalist system, and to stratify the black population through the creation of a middle class as a buffer against popular revolution. Extending some form of property rights to urban blacks is a component of this recipe for stabilization. Black landownership, it has been correctly calculated, can contribute to capital formation and the upgrading of housing stock in the townships in a way exceptionally attractive for a national authority reluctant to extend its involvement in the township areas. The existence of black property rights also clears the way for financially hard pressed administration boards such as WRAB to construct housing on a relatively more profitable sale rather than rental basis. For precisely this reason what little housing has been undertaken by the board since 1977 has been of the "elite" 77/16 variety - of the "super matchbox" variety as it is acrimoniously described in the townships. All of the 394 of the grand total of housing units built by WRAB during 1977/78 were actually built for sale rather than rental purposes.<sup>53</sup>

The so-called 99-year leasehold scheme legalizing select blacks to hold property in the "white" urban areas supports these developments. It is unprecedented in the annals of urban black policy in its admission that for social, if not necessarily political purposes, black city-dwellers are relatively permanent features of the urban metropolis. At the same time, much as with the Soweto Council, the

ability of the leasehold system to build political supports is impeded by a number of initial drawbacks. These seem serious enough to limit the number of Sowetons accepting the new opportunities to a miniscule handful. Reflecting ideological continuities in Nationalist policy, the 99-year scheme grants no right to freehold title, which, by implication, would recognize the perpetual rather than transitory presence of urban blacks in white South Africa. Secondly, the system depends on the pass laws since it applies only to city blacks "qualified" to be in the white area under existing influx control legislation. Even urban blacks enjoying this status can have it revoked at any time, and as a result, even "qualified" city blacks have little incentive to stake their savings in housing investments. Prospective homebuyers moreover are responsible for a variety of hidden costs, for site-surveying etc, which, it is calculated, raises the costs of housing by some four hundred percent in the initial instance.<sup>54</sup> The overwhelming majority of poor Sowetons cannot even afford the initial downpayments on the few available purchasable houses. Prospective buyers can rarely raise the necessary finances from white banks and building societies which normally grant loans on houses of a much higher standard than those constructed by the board.<sup>55</sup> As Black Sash president, Sheena Duncan, remarked: the leasehold system "will not improve the quality of life for the majority of township inhabitants" but will "merely disguise the real proportions of the housing crisis while helping the few who can afford to take advantage of it."<sup>56</sup>

White capital has however always been entwined with policies of racial segregation. With P.W. Botha's "total strategy" involving increased cooperation between the public and private sector, large white industrial and commercial interests have become drawn into welfare

activities in the townships. Either they do so on their own initiative, or, as is more frequently the case, given the bureaucratic maze through which they are forced to work, at the behest of government. For their part the Nationalists see the business sector as a valuable surrogate for themselves in township development. As the linkages between capital and Afrikaner nationalism have intensified with growing threats to the present free enterprise system, so businessmen have come to display considerable interest in the idea of building a stable black middle class. Insofar as reforms in government policy favor white penetration of an enormous black market, the private sector has begun to take on responsibilities for extending the service grid in Soweto.

During March 1977 one of the most systematic efforts by white capital to involve itself in township welfare within the present system, the Urban Foundation was established. Its purpose is the improvement of conditions in South Africa's black, Indian and Colored areas. Backed by elite organizations, the prestigious foundation has since played an important role in upgrading Soweto (among other townships), through the erection of houses and schools, by attracting overseas and local loans to finance activities of this type and by lobbying government to introduce legislation to eliminate the various statutory restraints on accelerated social development. The foundation has been an important group working for the introduction of urban black property rights. In conjunction with Johannesburg's major banks and the Association of Building Societies, it has sought to devise schemes to offset the financial inhibitions confronting black home-buyers under the leasehold system.<sup>57</sup> Private enterprise has also been responsible for the design of the so-called Ecoplan - or Soweto Development Guidance System, as it is infrequently called - which will

ostensibly transform Soweto into a high-rise, modern and fully-serviced urban complex at a cost of R750 million.<sup>58</sup> This plan, it is projected, will entirely transform the township infrastructure, its transport, housing, water and power systems. Involving major South African banks and construction companies, including Roberts Construction, Anglo-American's LTA, Siemens (S.A.) and Standard, Barclays, Netherlands and Volkskas banks, it has already moved into its first phase concerned with the electrification of the townships.<sup>59</sup>

It is important not to denigrate the material and political consequences of these efforts in the light of the historic neglect of Soweto by the public sector. TEACH - the so-called "teach every African" scheme organized by a Johannesburg newspaper and backed by Barclays Bank and Goldfields Consolidated, has built some 42 much-needed schools and 465 classrooms in the townships,<sup>60</sup> including the triple Emdeni complex.<sup>61</sup> Independent of its role in the leasehold scheme at governmental level during 1977/78, the Urban Foundation has raised some R63 million in overseas and local loans, (subsequently ploughed into black housing and education), initiated some 84 housing and educational projects, (70 of which were complete by April 1979),<sup>62</sup> and concluded an agreement with the Department of National Education and Training to establish a variety of further educational projects to be operated under government authority. It is anticipated that the first stage of the electrification program will service some 20,000 houses by the end of 1981.<sup>63</sup> With the completion of the entire project during the next five years facets of social existence in Soweto will be transformed in a fashion which must build some instrumental political capital for the system.

The definite limits to which the private sector can fill the political gap in the legacy of township welfare are nevertheless

forbidding. It cannot compensate for governmental neglect of the development needs of an area such as Soweto. The roughly R2 million spent by the Urban Foundation on adult, pre-school and careers training, the erection of classrooms and the electrification of secondary schools to allow nighttime education, is miniscule in relation to Soweto's educational backlog. It does not come to terms with the basic political fact articulated in the 1976 riots that a major source of black alienation lies in the discriminatory principles applied in the educational system. Elements within the business sector are also unlikely to go against the dictates of competitive capitalism. Critics of the Eco-plan have pointed out remarkable similarities between its basic spirit and that long associated with government: in both cases Sowetons are expected, in the long-standing tradition, to pay their own way for their own services. The basic finances for the plan are to derive from Sowetons purchasing their own housing. The whole scheme, as its formulators are forced to admit, can only be brought into operation if 80 percent of Sowetons buy.<sup>64</sup> This is most unlikely to occur.<sup>65</sup>

Because there is so little evidence that the activities of the private sector are bound to philanthropy or anything departing from a rationalized version of apartheid, many township-dwellers see the work of such groups as the Urban Foundation as paternalistic. For the most part, with the exception of the township bourgeoisie, they remain deeply suspicious even while pragmatically accepting subsequent material benefits. The Foundation in particular has taken considerable pains to encourage black participation in determining priorities and designing and implementing township projects.<sup>66</sup> In many ways South Africa's business community is far more sensitive to the need for social change than is government. Yet resulting mild reformism may not

central government, WRAB and the different competing sectors of private considerations involving the conflicting interests of the Nationalist the township becomes caught up in a maze of political and ideological bureaucratic red tape but because any program to improve conditions in implementing its welfare and development projects not only because of In practice, the private sector experiences monumental delays in framework.

determined to set the pace and direction of change within the apartheid finances of the private sector, the Nationalist government remains arguments of business cannot pass. While mobilizing the skills and ideological threshold over which the polite and relatively pragmatic strongly advocated by the Urban Foundation, suggests an inflexible The failure of the leasehold to be converted to freehold, as was so pressures and representations arising out of the business sector. want to manipulate these principles in the face of liberalizing The adoption of the leasehold scheme indicates that the Nationalists slightly departing from essential apartheid principles in practice, balanced against the harsh dogmatism of its predecessors, but only present government's reform program, rhetorically impressive when counterpart. The influence of electoral responsibilities limits the is far more willing to make ideological concessions than its government But the business community, without conservative electoral restraints the present system requires adjustment if it is to survive at all. government and business are essentially united in the realization that social change do not bode well for township development. Both Considerable variance in government and business perceptions of arising out of them.

in the black urban areas or the complex of suspicions and hostilities be adequate to meet either the enormous conditions of mass deprivation



enterprise.<sup>67</sup> The history of the project to electrify Soweto is a case in point. Originally proposed by an "English" consortium it has been constantly delayed since 1976 by the refusal of WRAB to recognize the venture as either technically or economically feasible, (on grounds, incidentally rejected, by sophisticated planning experts). It was only during 1979, hard upon the resignation of Barclays Bank from the consortium and its replacement of the Afrikaner Volksskas Merchants Bank as the leading financial body in the group, that its plan was suddenly and quite unexpectedly given WRAB approval.<sup>68</sup> By this time, costs had risen some three-fold, from R60 million to R158 million. Many elements in the consortium were confirmed in their impression that it is government policy to "Afrikanerize" private sector involvement in the townships. Whether this is the case remains to be proved, yet the entire incident recalls the past. When the townships need development, the requirements of its inhabitants come last among various considerations.

#### IV CONCLUSION: THE LIMITS OF WELFARE STRATEGY

Manipulating welfare-type rewards serves as a potent weapon in the governmental armory in confronting escalating political demands on the part of the poor. Even the cases where it is impossible for social services to be brought up to fairly reasonable standards, the distribution of governmental largesse can, at least in the short-term, build specific and even diffuse support for the system on both a personal and collective basis.<sup>69</sup> In general, the propensity of the poor to participate in community organizations and other forms of cooperative political activity tends to fall sharply once the most acute of their material problems are being treated.<sup>70</sup> Although benefits may flow from a government widely regarded as illegitimate, a tangible source of assistance can create incentives for political

compliance on the part of the deprived. This incentive is independent of the intensity of deprivation and the hostility directed at the prevailing authorities. Psychologies of dependence and compromise can, in other words, be cultivated among the poor through the extension of welfare even under conditions where support for the system is minimal. This does not mean that welfare and system supports are directly and inextricably tied together so that the distribution of one supposes the proportionate development of the other. In poor communities where material demands are being met and are seen to be attracting governmental sympathy and attention, powerful deradicalizing and demobilizing forces working to the advantage of the system can be set in motion.

South Africa's white governmental authorities and supporting elite are committed to the belief that pumping social services into such volatile black concentrations as Soweto is an important source of political capital. The recent decision to accord attenuated property rights to urban blacks meshes with the enormous importance attached to secure land tenure and residential rights by poor urban communities. The decision of many governments to ameliorate the politically disturbing affects of hyperurbanization by shifting from hostility to acquiescence with regard to illegally formed urban squatter settlements - in Latin America for example - attests to the wisdom of this technique. If the Nationalists can find it possible to grant freehold status to urban blacks with clear rights of inheritance and sale they could have a powerful political weapon at their disposal. Since the urban poor tend to evaluate their personal position in relation to perceived mobility opportunities for their offspring, the relatively positive moves by the Nationalists in the field of black education are also important, although they do not essentially differ from the principles of bantu education. The current thrust of South Africa's government-

controlled media to project the eighties as symbolic of a new and progressive South African order tends to encourage black hopes of imminent change, even though a history of broken promises has bred widespread cynicism in many township quarters.

Welfare politics are not however not always a perfect recipe for political stability, least of all under the complex conditions of contemporary South Africa where race, politics and ideology impose tight limits on unconventional forms of political and social behaviour. If welfare is to be bent to effective political support-building in communities such as Soweto, where the threads of illegitimacy run very deep, this would, for one matter, involve massive outlays of money and material which may be inadequate in relation to the accumulated resentments against the system on the part of township dwellers, but which may still involve major diversions of social resources from the elite sector accustomed by historic tradition and its inbred sense of racial superiority to expect first pickings in the process by which government allocates public favors. Since the distribution of welfare resources inevitably implies the distribution of social power, the privileged elements of South Africa's white community, be they political leaders, administrators or businessmen in the private sector, are most unlikely to endorse enthusiastically policies adding weight to their erstwhile challengers. As the elite becomes more beleaguered, the possibilities for social and political experimentation fade away and the forcefulness of the argument that improving the social conditions of urban blacks is the best means to assure stability tends to diminish. Even should this not occur, socially upgrading Soweto touches on the basic structures of the South African political economy with its inbuilt inequalities and racial features. Welfare policies appropriate to the objective needs of a

community as grossly deprived as Soweto requires simply more than houses, schools and improved social facilities. The conversion of Soweto into a viable and assumedly politically stable environment requires a re-examination and reorganization of social structures of a degree which the privileged elite shows no real commitment to undertake. The costs of welfare in this case are simply greater than what the elite is prepared to pay.

Welfare as a means to manage the discontented poor politically, is also related to the pattern of alternative demands made upon government in the process of allocating social resources. In South Africa today the seemingly elementary value of buying urban black favors as a hedge against black revolution is constantly traded against a welter of counter-priorities arising out of the political logic with which the present Nationalist government is confronted. No white South African government has found (or even consistently sought) a way around the principle fundamentally embedded in the elite political culture that whites enjoy an absolute priority on public resources. This is a continuous thread running through the entire development experience of Soweto. Urban black claims to welfare also compete with homeland demands for development assistance and with a white xenophobia arising from international pressure. Public resources feed into the rural sector in support of apartheid's fantasy of "independent" black states. To many members of the elite moreover, "security" is associated with new, better and more expensive armaments rather than satisfying urban black demands for elementary justice. In the last analysis it requires political protests, riots and demonstrations for Sowetons to project their claims and bring to the attention of the authorities the insufficiency of township existence.

There is, as has already been suggested, no automatic relationship

between the satisfaction of welfare needs and system supports. Identification with a political system turns on a variety of amorphous subjective factors the sum-total of which defines feelings of legitimacy and authority. Welfare policies as mechanisms of support require a preconditional belief that the political system is basically mobile and open to eventual improvement.<sup>71</sup> In race-saturated South Africa trust in the sincerity of government authority on the part of Sowetons is limited. Their historic and overall pattern of contacts with the system have been characteristically discriminatory. On the rare occasions when government reacts to the material problems confronting blacks, it is seen to be doing so under acute stress. This stimulates few politically significant expectations of long-term improvement.

The attitudes of the poor to political systems and authority are also heavily influenced by direct daily experience with the agents of state control, especially the police and low-grade bureaucratic officials. Profoundly negative experiences with them tend to cancel government beneficence. Welfare contends with widespread popular feelings that improved social services and opportunities are gratuitous in spirit and devious in purpose.

The politics of welfare are finally dynamic in a fashion which can produce effects quite the opposite to support-building and demobilization. Empirical studies in poor communities have pointed out that the distribution of services reduces citizen remoteness from government and raises popular perceptions of government responsibility for the satisfaction of popular demands and expectations of governmental performance.<sup>72</sup> Survey research suggests that the distribution of public services among the poor correlates positively with political participation through heightened feelings of political efficacy.<sup>73</sup>

This means that positive government responses to welfare calls can feed the development and accumulation of both political and economic demands in a way which ultimately accumulates to threaten the capabilities of the system. In the South African case, government has never responded to urban black appeals in a way to stimulate this process of politicization. The logic of minority power, the myths of separation, the insensitivities bred of racial arrogance and administrative ineptitude have all conspired to blunt the process of raised expectations. At the same time the manipulation of welfare for political purposes is an identifiable theme in the contemporary situation. The white elite has basically two options in managing the problem posed by Soweto, apart that is, from the politically disastrous course of reversing its commitment to develop the townships somehow. It can adopt a carrot and stick approach, blending extended welfare with systematic sanctions designed to cream off the organizational resources lending substance to welfare-induced politicization. Alternatively, it can seek to channel new participation into specially created political infrastructures which neutralize, absorb or somehow manipulate the political consequences of increased welfare. It is with these two options worked jointly, their problems and prospects, that the following chapters are concerned.

FOOTNOTES.

<sup>1</sup> See Gerald Breese, Urbanization in Newly-Developing Countries (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966).

<sup>2</sup> Wayne Cornelius, Politics and the Migrant Poor in Mexico City (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975).

<sup>3</sup> Although there is fairly extensive literature on the administration and local politics of early Johannesburg, few accounts give more than passing attention to the urban black population. In this regard, see, for example, Felix Stark (ed.), Seventy Golden Years, 1886-1956 (Johannesburg: Johannesburg Municipal Public Relations Bureau, 1956). A partial exception to this rule is John. P.R. Naud, City Government: The Johannesburg Experiment (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938). Patrick Lewis, City Within a City: The Creation of Soweto (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Press, 1969) is the most widely quoted work on the early years of the black townships.

<sup>4</sup> The Natives Land Act of 1913 purported to deal with the ownership and occupation of land by blacks throughout the Union by dividing the country into areas where only blacks could acquire land and other areas open only to persons other than members of the black population. This piece of legislation was an important factor in the development of policies of land segregation subsequently built into the National Party's apartheid platform. For further reading on rural pressures in the early twentieth century,

see Colin Bundy, "The Transkei Peasantry, 1930-1914," pp. 201-220 in Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons (eds.), The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa (London: Heinemann, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> Lewis, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> A major problem in analyzing black migration to Johannesburg is the lack of reliable statistics on movement between the rural and urban areas. In Johannesburg's early years blacks were normally excluded from the local census - in 1890, 1918, 1926 and then again, in 1931. Nevertheless, all evidence suggests that the city's black population increased significantly from 1904 onwards. By 1936 it was estimated that there were 191, 338 blacks in the metropolitan area. Maud, ibid, p. 384. According to 1978 figures, blacks numbered an estimated 784,500 out of a total city population of 1,416,700. The Star (Johannesburg) December 4, 1978.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the workings on the council's labor bureau, see Richard de Villiers, "The State, the Johannesburg Municipality and the Reserve Army," Paper presented at workshop, The Witwatersrand: Labor, Townships And Patterns of Protest, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, February 3/7, 1978.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Maud, p. 59. The special concern of central government for urban blacks is indicated in such early legislation



as sections 85 and 147 of the South Africa Act and in the Urban Areas Passes Act, No 18 of 1908 (Transvaal). This latter instrument allows authorities at local level the right to establish black townships yet reserves control of the curfew and influx control to the central authorities.

<sup>10</sup> Maud, p. 135. Western Native Township was the germination of South Western Townships subsequently abbreviated in popular parlance to SOWETO in 1963. Strictly-speaking, Soweto includes only the 26 townships under the control of the Johannesburg City Council prior to 1971, but it is common to speak of all 29 black areas south of Johannesburg as "Soweto" since they all fall under the common jurisdiction of the West Rand Bantu Administration Board at present.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis, p. 5. The Orlando township was originally planned to house eighty thousand inhabitants. Its construction was begun in 1932 and by the time of the outbreak of World War II, some 8,700 houses had been erected.

<sup>12</sup> For a useful account of the squatter political movements emerging in the townships immediately after (and during) World War II, see, A.W. Stadler, "Birds in the Cornfield: Squatter Movements in Johannesburg, 1944-1947," Paper presented at the workshop, The Witwatersrand: Labor, Townships and Patterns of Protest," *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> In 1930 there were some 2,625 council-built houses in the townships, 8,700 in 1939, 9,573 (1945), 16,577 (1950).

18,346 (1955), 51,714 (1960), 62,475 (1965) and 65,564 in 1969. Lewis, p. 43.

<sup>14</sup> A recent survey estimates at an average of ten persons live in each of Soweto's four-roomed houses, only a small number of which have electricity or indoor sanitary facilities. Financial Mail (Johannesburg), December 9, 1977; Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg), November 29, 1972.

<sup>15</sup> There are nine libraries, one cinema and twelve tennis courts for a township population estimated in the region of over one million, Financial Mail, ibid.

<sup>16</sup> See Ellen Hellmann, Soweto (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1971).

<sup>17</sup> In the words of the Stallard Commission of 1922 - "We consider that the history of the races, especially having regard to South African history, shows that the comingling of black and white is undesirable. The natives should only be allowed to enter urban areas which are essentially the white man's creation when they are willing to enter and minister to the needs of the white man and should depart therefrom when they cease so to minister." Transvaal Local Government Commission. T.P. 1-1922.

<sup>18</sup> Prior to the Bantu Building Workers Act of 1951 which provided for the use of skilled black labor in the construction industry, the white building unions consistently opposed the use of blacks to build township houses. The rise in construction costs meant cutbacks in the city council's housing program. A noteworthy exception was the

so-called COTT scheme initiated by the council after World War II. See Stadler, ibid. White landlords were well known to manipulate the council's black policy when it came to siting townships - particularly in the earlier years of the city - while industrial and commercial interests have always led the opposition to the imposition of employment levies.

<sup>19</sup> The separation of black and white municipal revenue accounts dates back to British colonial practice. See de Villiers, ibid. Lewis, p. 43. tabulates the mounting deficits on the Johannesburg Bantu Revenue Account as follows: R30,976 (1927); R6,486 (1935); R24,864 credit (1940); R191,798 (1948); R341,716 (1955); R686,250 (1960); R474,520 (1965) and R218,656 (1969).

<sup>20</sup> The 1919-21 report of the Department of Native Affairs also emphasized the need to "place the responsibility for the accomodation and well-being of the native residents of the urban areas on the local authorities." Report of the Department of Native Affairs, 1919-21. Union Government 34/22. p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> The decision to remove these two areas from council control was taken in retaliation for the council's refusal to remove slumdwellers from Sophiatown where a number of black properties were held under freehold title. In terms of the Bantu Resettlement Act of 1954, Diepkloof and Meadowlands were placed under a separate Bantu Resettlement Board.

<sup>22</sup> The two acts in question were the Liquor Amendment Act, no 71 of 1961 and No. 89 of 1962.

<sup>23</sup> The Bantu Administration Act of 1971 created 22 boards nation-wide, each of which was brought into operation on an individual basis during 1972 and 1973.

<sup>24</sup> This clearly emerged from interviews conducted with former officials in the course of research.

<sup>25</sup> Government-sponsored institutions went to great lengths to justify the board system both before and immediately after its inception; for a representative argument of this type, see South African Bureau of Racial Affairs, "Bantoeadministrasierade: Hul Plek en Hul Funksies," Memorandum, 2(74), 1974.

<sup>26</sup> Under the existing influx control laws blacks must qualify to work in an urban area failing which they must leave it within seventy two hours of arrival. Since blacks are forced to work in individual designated areas, industry in any region can only draw on a finite pool of labor. Large-scale employers of blacks have therefore always pressed for administrative areas to be designated as large as possible.

<sup>27</sup> The prestigious South African Institute of Race Relations issued a memorandum in response to the 1971 Act stating that it "cannot agree with the authoritarian nature of this bill and can only see it as one more measure aimed at bringing South Africa even closer to a complete system of centralized and bureaucratic state control, with the whole African population constituting a state within a state under the direction of the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development." Memorandum on the Bantu Administration

Act. RR. 5/71, 1971.

<sup>28</sup> On this point see Philip Frankel, "Status, Group Consciousness and Political Participation: Black Consciousness in Soweto," Paper presented at the workshop, The Witwatersrand: Townships, Labor and Patterns of Protest, *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> The Star, June 30, 1976.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted from P.J. Koornhoff, "Urban Bantu Policy," in N. Rhodie (ed.), South African Dialogue. (Johannesburg: McGraw Hill, 1972).

<sup>32</sup> Frankel, ibid.

<sup>33</sup> The Star, June 30, 1976.

<sup>34</sup> On the financial situation of the board see the annual surveys produced by the South African Institute of Race Relations, The World (Johannesburg)° June 24, 1977 and The Star, June 21, 1977.

<sup>35</sup> The World, June 24, 1977.

<sup>36</sup> The Star, April 24, 1978; Rand Daily Mail, November 14, 1977.

<sup>37</sup> The responsibility for building township schools is shared between the board - which constructs community schools - and the Department of Public Works, responsible for state school buildings.

<sup>38</sup> The Star, November 1, 1978.

<sup>39</sup> The Star, October 26, 1978; Martin Creamer, "City Without a Heart," Sunday Times (Johannesburg), May 1, 1977.

<sup>40</sup> Post (Johannesburg), December 6, 1978.

<sup>41</sup> The Star, February 26, 1979.

<sup>42</sup> Post, May 27, 1979.

<sup>43</sup> The Star, November 30, 1978.

<sup>44</sup> Rand Daily Mail, August 22, 1978.

<sup>45</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>46</sup> Rand Daily Mail, April 8, 1978.

<sup>47</sup> The Star, March 1, 1979.

<sup>48</sup> Rand Daily Mail, August 22, 1978.

<sup>49</sup> According to one official statement, the Soweto Council's powers relate to "housing matters, combatting unlawful occupation of land and buildings, allocation and administration of sites for church, school and trading purposes, approval of building plans, promotion of moral and social welfare matters, promotion of community development, the beautifying and neatness of the area and the establishment of a community guard." Rand Daily Mail, September 6, 1978.

<sup>50</sup> Rand Daily Mail, September 6, 1978; The Star, January 15, 1979.

<sup>51</sup> Rand Daily Mail, April 19, 1978; The Star, March 2, 1979.

52 The Bantu Administration Board has attempted to stimulate community support for the Soweto Council in a number of novel ways. These include organizing a lottery, bombarding the townships with leaflets from overhead helicopters and entering into negotiations with anonymous "representatives" of the community, later found to be fictitious. There is also some evidence of board manipulation of electoral roles during council elections.

53 Post, August 27, 1978.

54 Financial Mail, December 9, 1977.

55 The Star, November 30, 1979.

56 The Star, April 27, 1978.

57 The Star, January 15, 1979.

58 The Star, March 8, 1979; Sunday Times, June 10, 1979.

59 The Star, April 4, 1977; The Star, November 18, 1977; Sunday Times, June 10, 1979.

60 The Star, July 12, 1978.

61 The Star, March 12, 1978.

62 Post, April 24, 1979.

63 Rand Daily Mail, November 6, 1979..

64 The Star, March 8, 1979.

65 The Star, March 9, 1979.

66 The Star, June 21, 1979.

67 Rand Daily Mail, August 23, 1978.

68 Sunday Times, June 10, 1979.

69 Cornelius, ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 See J.R. Mathiason, "Patterns of Powerlessness Among Urban Poor: Towards the Use of Mass Communications for Rapid Social Change," Studies in Comparative International Development, 7 (1) 1972.



## CHAPTER 6

### POLICE AND PASSES:

#### THE POLITICS OF SANCTIONS

##### I INTRODUCTION

A curious anomaly in South African studies is the absence of research dealing systematically with the instruments of white domination - despite universal criticism of the country's authoritarian political features.<sup>1</sup> There is, more specifically, virtually nothing on the political role of the local police, even though it is the police rather than the military who have direct responsibility for containing black resistance, in the volatile townships in particular. The extant literature normally begins and ends with a catalogue of brutalities and no real attempts have been made to extend and diversify our knowledge of the South African situation by exploiting the conceptually rich literature on the police as political actors in authoritarian, racially stratified or urban systems.<sup>2</sup>

These gaps in the literature are partially attributable to the general lack of interest in police and politics topics among students of political development.<sup>3</sup> Yet they also mirror specific problems attached to analyzing the police in the South African context. Research on the police is always inhibited by access problems reflecting the characteristic solidarity of police organizations.<sup>4</sup> South African police officials are no exception in their reluctance to expose their business to intrusive civilian investigation. In South Africa, in addition, an exceptionally wide range of police activities are considered beyond the threshold of legitimate public concern because

of the "closed" nature of the political system. As the annual parliamentary debates on the police vote indicate, the line between criticizing the police and subverting the "national interest" is very thin indeed. Outside of parliament psychologies of this type are backed by a mass of legislation designed specifically to shield police institutions from either academic or nonacademic surveillance. Naturally enough, the barriers to investigation rise proportionate to research approaching such delicate political issues as the operations of the Security Police in the black townships.

South Africa is nevertheless a system founded on force and the police are a vital element upholding the white monopoly on power. In most developed states today the overt use of state force is complemented by a variety of control techniques, some so oblique as to defy detection even by the groups they are designed to regulate or repress. South Africa's so-called "stalled revolution" is not simply a result of the effectiveness with which the white minority has applied the more blatantly violent and directly coercive means of domination. Bantu education inculcating ideologies of white technological and organizational supremacy is part of the less tangible repertoire of control, as is the manipulation of trans-racial symbols of external aggression and the continued ability of the system to offer co-optive type rewards for compliant black behaviour. Yet, in the last analysis, contemporary South Africa displays many of the features of the classic police state, and the size and behaviour of the police (and military) are crucial not only in inhibiting external intervention in the system, but in holding the line against internal revolution emanating out of the townships. While recognizing research limitations derived from the nature of the system, there is, in addition, a quite substantial and readily available amount of suggestive, if raw and unintegrated, empirical and conjectural

data sufficient to support a more systematic treatment of the important relationship between the police, urban blacks and the political system than has been attempted before.<sup>5</sup>

The political role of the police in areas such as Soweto is basically two-fold. Firstly, the police are simply an instrument of control: it is their function to maintain order if not necessarily to uphold justice in these areas, with all the subsidiary roles that this task entails. The police are however also instruments of political socialization in the township communities where their actions influence political culture, black perceptions of the political system, the demands that they make upon it, the supports they give to it, and their general reactions to race relations.<sup>6</sup> Both social functions are, it should be emphasized, inter-related, for the capacity of the police to maintain order in the townships is not only a matter of the coercive resources they have at their disposal. It is also a matter of the social relationships forged in the daily crucible of police-community interaction - relationships which either encourage system supports and black affiliations to the system, or, alternatively, heighten perceptions of illegitimacy and orientations against it.

The controlling and socialization roles of the police in Soweto are also performed in close inter-connection with South Africa's notorious pass law system. These laws, it should be stressed, need not directly serve political ends. By increasing the "pull" of the rural sector influx control can serve the legitimate social goal of countering hyper-urbanization. Most white South African rhetoric rationalizes the pass system in these terms. Yet, as the experience of other authoritarian states indicates, restrictions on mass movement to the cities can be used as political tools by elites intent upon consolidating unequal distributions of social power.<sup>7</sup> In South Africa,

where influx control has been used to regulate black entry and exit from the metropolises on a nation-wide basis since 1952, it has clearly been elevated to this explicit political position.<sup>8</sup> Today, virtually independent of any other social functions they may serve, the pass laws are integral to the collection of instruments employed by the white minority to absorb blacks into the economy while maintaining political domination. And in areas such as Soweto, it is the South African police, above all other institutions, who are responsible for their enforcement.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the police-passes-control-socialization nexus with an eye to two issues. Firstly, it is concerned with the capabilities of the police as mechanisms of political control in the black urban areas, (Soweto in particular), and with how these capabilities are affected, both negatively and positively, by the pass system. Secondly, we are concerned with the police in their role of township political socializers, again with reference to the way in which the existence of the pass system shapes urban black political culture. Both issues should, in the last analysis, be seen as part of the broader question of whether it is at all possible for the South African government to institute an effective policy of sanctions and coercion in the townships for the foreseeable future.

## II THE POLITICS OF SANCTIONS: THE RESOURCES

The pace of political change in South Africa is largely, but by no means exclusively, determined by the effectiveness with which the white minority wields the various formal and informal means of domination in its strategic armory. Since the police are responsible for enforcing the formal rules of the system in both the urban and rural areas, they are a crucial element in this power conglomerate.

The Nationalist authorities have recognized this fact ever since the political disturbances of the early sixties when they first embarked on a program of reorganizing the police and military to meet the twin threats of internal subversion and external aggression.<sup>9</sup>

In the area of police recruitment considerable energy has since been expended on exploiting the reservoir of low-status black, Indian and Colored manpower many of whose members, as deprived elements elsewhere, perceive law enforcement as a channel for upward mobility.<sup>10</sup> South African police forces have experienced little difficulty historically in recruiting from the subject race groups, the black majority included. During the seventies, with unemployment a characteristic feature of township life, the idea of the deprived policing themselves, has been expanded. Today, more than ever, the police is a multi-racial body, (in composition if not in command structure), with roughly half its members being of black, Indian and Colored origin, mainly in the lower ranks of the organizational hierarchy.<sup>11</sup> Police activity has also been embedded in a dense informal and formal social network in the urban areas. In Soweto, the municipal and provincial traffic police as well as the black township police controlled by the West Rand Administration Board complement the regular police in prosecuting criminal and statutory offences.<sup>12</sup> Whites in the Johannesburg area and elsewhere are also integrated into police roles through the South African Police Wachthuis, (a force of amateur radio operators forming an important link in the police communications system), and, more formally, through the Reserve Police Force created as a citizen unit of trained part-time police-men following the 1960 disturbances.<sup>13</sup> In the rural areas many of the functions of the national police have been taken over by local police forces trained by the South African authorities.<sup>14</sup> The

existence of these new "homeland" police forces (and army units) frees the police to concentrate manpower in the black urban areas of "white" South Africa. In these areas moreover, there is a tendency towards localized police power as apartheid moves in the direction of community control of the black townships. In a move which will both add to police manpower in dealing with political disturbances and diffuse their moral blame in containing them, the newly-established Soweto Council has been armed with its own "community guard" to work in conjunction with the police in enforcing law in Johannesburg's black areas.<sup>15</sup>

The legal framework of police behaviour has also been extended in a fashion blurring the boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate police action while arming the police with a series of preemptive powers to stifle township protest at its inception. The institutionalization of apartheid over the last thirty four years has seen a progressive dilution of legal constraints on the unfettered application of police power. Yet, this process with all its encroachments on both black and white civil liberties,<sup>16</sup> has been encouraged in police circles who have been elevated to new positions of power and social prestige as a result of it. Today, the carte blanche given the police to attend any social gathering and arrest those present merely on the suspicion that a law might be violated; the ambiguous formulation of such instruments as the Suppression of Communism Act; the tendency to shift the burden of proof onto the accused in cases of political crime; and the intermixture of legislative devices allowing the police virtually limitless powers of arrest and detention, are not simply violations of the rule of law. They are also sources of political power, fueling the force as an instrument of political control over black and white, inside and beyond township boundaries.

In Soweto itself, the enormous judgemental capacity given the police beyond recourse of law feeds a climate of terror which greatly assists the police in their control functions. The presence of plainclothes policemen at even the most innocuous township gatherings creates an image of constant vigilance:<sup>17</sup> the dense network of police informants gathering intelligence and creating a destabilizing atmosphere of mutual suspicion reinforces this impression. The poverty of the townships creates a natural pool of individuals receptive to police rewards for assistance. In addition, the police are adept at exploiting ethnic tensions. There is considerable evidence drawn from the 1976 riots pointing to police recruiting the more politically conservative migrant workers to act against dissident groups, striking workers and students in particular.<sup>18</sup> Today it is police policy to station rural black policemen in the urban areas where they have few associations and with whose inhabitants they are unfamiliar.<sup>19</sup> Finally, there are gradations in police treatment of prisoners corresponding to racial differences. In black areas such as Soweto, where it is accepted that arrest will inevitably be followed by inordinately harsh treatment outside of the law, the costs of political involvement are raised to the point of demobilization.

Police technologies have also been upgraded in recent years to allow specialized resources being brought to the control role in the townships.<sup>20</sup> By 1972 more public revenue was already being devoted to the police than to national education, and it was then conservatively estimated that the force was equipped with eighty armored personnel carriers and close to 500 specially designed riot control trucks.<sup>21</sup> During and since 1976 these have been employed in Soweto with devastating affects on an almost regular basis. Extensive use is also made of hundreds of police dogs trained at the South African Police Dog

School at Kwaggaspoort, of tear gas, and of a number of ingenious locally designed means of riot control such as the notorious "sneeze machines" used during the latter part of the 1976 riots. Since the late sixties when the guerilla war in Namibia indicated various lacunae in police training, attention has been given to the formation of counterinsurgency units for use both on the border and in the black urban areas.<sup>22</sup> Special riot squads are now attached to divisional units in Soweto and all other urban centers with significant black populations.<sup>23</sup> Since tours of duty in the so-called "operational area" (i.e. on the border) have become the rule for all policemen under fifty, the greater bulk of the force has experienced on-the-job training in anti-terrorist activities. Some of the cream of the police have nevertheless been formed into an elite task force to deal with urban terrorism.

In the last analysis, no discussion of the resources brought by the police to Soweto can avoid the enormous control potential of the pass laws. These laws, although associated with the National Party in the public eye, actually predate its coming to power by almost 200 years. The notion of controlling black movement in the interests of social order, to prevent crime and over-urbanization, or to channel black labor from rural to urban areas, originates as far back as 1780 when slaves at the Cape were required to carry documents authorizing their travel back and forth between town and country.<sup>24</sup> It was however only in 1922 that the philosophical basis of the pass system was articulated by the Stallard doctrine, the essence of which was that the towns were white areas to which blacks were permitted entry only in so far as they ministered to the needs of the white man.<sup>25</sup> The Native Urban Areas Act of 1923 and the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1937 created the legislative foundations of the modern system of influx control, and the machinery making it increasingly difficult for



blacks to enter the metropolitan environment.<sup>26</sup>

The grand objective of reserving urban white South Africa for a white minority drawing on black labor is today further from realization than ever before. What has been achieved by influx control in the face of the integrating forces of economic modernization is what one commentator has described as "a cancerous growth in the body politic", depersonalizing both black and white, and enmeshing each and every black town-dweller in a web of discriminatory laws and administrative regulations whose explicit purpose is to frustrate his normal existence.<sup>27</sup> Yet, in areas such as Soweto the influx control laws remain lethal in assisting the police in their control capacity. They are in many ways the foundations upon which the whole structure of police power is erected.

This flows from the essentials of the pass system, written into law, which hold that all black South Africans over the age of sixteen must carry "reference books" that authorized officers of the state may require to see at any time. No black may be in a so-called "prescribed area" i.e. a "white" town, for more than seventy two hours unless he has obtained a special permit, has had his presence authorized by a government labor bureau allowing him to enter the area on a contract work basis, or unless he has acquired certain privileges extended gratuitously to select individuals by Section 10 of the 1945 Bantu Urban Areas Consolidation Act.<sup>28</sup> Contract laborers are doomed to classification as "farm labor" for their entire lives, and they are barred from acquiring Section 10 status or from being accompanied into the urban area by their wives or families.<sup>29</sup> Individuals not falling into the exempted categories are considered as "surplus appendages" and are liable to prosecution and/or "endorsement out", i.e. deportation, to any place deemed appropriate by the authorities.<sup>30</sup> Here they may be obliged to perform any labor

required of them subject to the place being any other than the home of the deportee.<sup>31</sup> In Soweto and other urban areas those with Section 10 status can apply for housing and other social welfare facilities subject to a variety of constraints, but they are barred from owning land or from entering into a wide range of economic activities. Their Section 10 privileges can, in addition, be revoked under any number of conditions.

This system allows all township dwellers to be categorized and disorganized to the advantage of the police who are in turn devoted to its protection and perpetuation. In the first place, the pass laws in Soweto subjects each of its inhabitants to a system of serialized documentation involving particulars of birth, employment, movement and association. The affect is to open the life of each individual to the scrutiny of the authorities. The regulations requiring blacks to produce documentary proof of their right to be in the urban area justifies daily police dragnets and street-corner interrogations both in the townships and beyond their boundaries in the adjacent "white" city. This facilitates the spot-checking and cross-referencing of all blacks, be they actual, potential, common or political criminals. The pass laws allow the police summary powers of arrest, and inasmuch as these are backed up by an informal system in which it is the right of every white to demand the production of a pass at any time, the public and private sector come together in a highly concentrated set of security arrangements which make it extremely difficult for "subversives" to enter an urban area or to remain there undetected for any appreciable period of time.<sup>32</sup>

The whole system has been extended and rationalized over the years by widening the categories of officials who can formally demand the production of a pass, and by linking this up with sophisticated computer technology centred on the reference book bureau of the

Department of Cooperation and Development in Pretoria.<sup>33</sup> In 1971, in an effort to counteract what was believed to be laxity of municipal officials in implementing influx control, responsibility for the system was transferred to a number of Bantu Administration Boards directly under the control of central government.<sup>34</sup> Police pressure played a part in this decision which now allows the West Rand Administration Board and the Johannesburg police to coordinate activity in prosecuting Influx control in Soweto. The working of the whole system is in any case facilitated by the inescapable identifiability of those it seeks to control, by supporting segregationist legislation, (such as the Group Areas Act which concentrates township-dwellers in their social transactions), and by a dense network of police informants working in an auxiliary capacity.

The contribution of the pass system to the control role of the police also stems from its ambiguous basis in law, which makes it easily adaptable as an instrument of intimidation. The privilege of being allowed to remain in the urban area has been described as one of the most deeply coveted values in the world.<sup>35</sup> Whether this is the case or not, it is indisputable that in South Africa withdrawal of this privilege for whatever reasons, political or not, means perpetual condemnation to a rootless existence, exile from family and livelihood, and a legal status divorced of any practical meaning. The mass of interpenetrating security legislation with which the police are armed certainly dampens the political enthusiasm of many Sowetons. Yet, if many steer clear of political involvement it is also because of fear of arrest for a pass offence held as a constant disincentive over the head of each member of the community.

The ability of the pass laws to raise the costs of political action - and thereby assist the police - also reflects the fact that

conviction under the security or common laws carries finite sanctions and there is still some possibility for judicial recourse, if increasingly less so in the former case. Neither of these protective conditions applies in the case of pass offences where, despite the philanthropic efforts of organizations such as the Black Sash to publicize the hardships imposed by the system, convictions remain impersonal, arbitrary and with little opportunity for higher appeal. The pass system is a facet of what has been termed "the legal-administrative apparatus of domination", grinding on extensively, silently and unspectacularly through the years.<sup>36</sup> Violators of influx control regulations find themselves caught up in a process that is not only designed to be vicious, dehumanizing and demobilizing, but also paradoxically screened from the public eye by the very immensity of its scale of operation.

Government policy tends to maximise the politically intimidating aspects of influx control particularly in regard to Section 10 blacks who are at once the most politically volatile and vulnerable group in the township communities. On numerous occasions National Party leaders have threatened to revoke Section 10 provisions en masse in order to induce political acquiescence. Administrative officials of the West Rand board have placed increasingly narrow constructions on the regulations allowing Section 10 dependents residence rights in the urban areas, and with encouragement from police officials, have extended the criteria for the withdrawal of Section 10 status.<sup>37</sup> According to some interpretations, the new "reformist" legislation for the townships introduced by the Botha government effectively eliminates Section 10 altogether. Today it is nevertheless easier to have any black, political dissidents included, removed from the townships on the slightest of pretexts or for the most technical of

statutory offences. In practice there is a huge discrepancy between the number of arrests and prosecutions under the pass laws. This suggests that the police utilise the system for other than pure influx control purposes.<sup>38</sup>

### III THE POLITICS OF SANCTIONS: THE CONSTRAINTS

It is important not to underestimate the potent combination of human and material resources available to the police in the performance of their control functions. Yet, the spirit of resistance manifest in the political disturbances in Soweto in recent years suggests that police activity has not succeeded in atomizing the townships to the point where they are incapable of instigating, organizing and occasionally sustaining protest-type political action. The fact that 1976 has not been repeated on the same scale need not necessarily mean a new climate of passivity and acquiescence. It may simply reflect a new low-key publicly-less visible period of planning and reorganization.

The capacity of the police to hold the line against a resurgence of more carefully articulated black protest in the immediate future, or, more broadly, to conduct a rigorous sanctions-type police in Soweto, is determined largely by three factors which together constitute the coercive muscle upon which such policies ultimately depend.

Firstly, such a policy is influenced by intra-organizational tensions within the police derived from different interpretations of organizational goals and strategies, and by conflicts of interest in relation to the distribution of organizational power and authority. The formation of the force along the centralized lines of the so-called "continental" prototype tends to confine the fragmenting affects of bureaucratic scale. Loyalty to the white, and particularly Afrikaner, community also acts as a powerful adhesive to police ranks. Yet,

commissioners-general of the police are appointed for unrenovable two-year terms of office and this means the upper ranks of the force never being entirely free of political maneuvers in anticipation of changes in leadership. The development of a garrison mentality in South Africa over the years has also elevated the status of the security section of the force, often to the displeasure of the officer corp of the regular divisions. These officers experience considerable difficulty in adjusting to the tightly compartmentalized mode of security policy operations. They also suspect organizational aggrandizement sown by the reallocation of many functions away from the regular branches to the security section, by the latter's tendency to skim off the best manpower, and by the ability of divisional chiefs of the security police to bypass divisional heads of the regular police under present command arrangements.<sup>39</sup> Since the security police tend to bring relatively sophisticated political perceptions to their roles, they are sometimes regarded as deviant ideologically and even overly-liberal.

The police force in Soweto is, above all, a multi-racial organization in the context of white-dominated society. In such an environment racial tensions are inevitably projected into police structures. While it is impossible on the basis of existing research to evaluate the extent that these pressures are cancelled out in the course of organizational socialization, it is readily evident that many black policemen experience intense role conflict by virtue of their intercalary suspension between the white dominated police force and the township community. The exact extension to which black policemen develop diffuse rather than instrumental affiliations with the force is also a matter for conjecture. Yet most black personnel when questioned readily admit that their professional performance is frustrated at

virtually every turn by the racial norms of society. The command structure of the police is racially exclusive, (with occasional exceptions in the middle ranks), and discrimination is rife in training, promotion and salaries. The average white constable in Soweto enjoys a higher status than the highest ranking black officer from whom he is not obliged to accept an order. The race links between black policemen and township dwellers also constantly impinge on race relations between policemen even though attempts to subvert the police have been historically unsuccessful. The failure of the Soweto students to persuade black policemen to resign from the force during 1977 is a case in point.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, the fairly commonplace reluctance of some black policemen to enforce certain laws, pass laws in particular, breeds an element of distrust between black and white policemen.<sup>41</sup>

Systematic police control of the townships is also inhibited by manpower shortages which partially reflect the wide variety of tasks policemen perform in present day South African society. As in other African systems where manpower shortages inhibited the development of a specialized administrative grid, South Africa's policemen are responsible for a wide variety of tasks tangentially related to the "normal" tasks of enforcing laws and preserving security. These include administering the agricultural census in rural areas, guarding the country's territorial fisheries and manning customs posts along national boundaries. With the spread of guerilla warfare in Southern Africa, border duties have in fact drawn increasing numbers of policemen away from the urban black areas. The police have emerged as a surrogate for the military in counter-insurgency operations in Zimbabwe and (to a lesser extent) in Namibia.<sup>42</sup> With increased incursions into South Africa itself, the proportion of the police force

being moved to such sensitive areas as the northern Transvaal and the Swaziland-Mozambique-Natal triangle is bound to increase.<sup>43</sup>

Regional defence not only diverts human resources away from the internal front: it also complicates recruiting white manpower. Today, many aspiring white policemen prefer to enter other areas of the labor market when confronted with the prospect of active military service. This is particularly the case with young men of English extraction who regard the police (correctly) as an Afrikaner-dominated institution.<sup>44</sup> Salaries and conditions of service in the police are also relatively poor with government reluctant to countenance improvements for fear of setting off a spiral of demands throughout the public service. In these circumstances, white manpower shortages, indicated by a widening gap between authorized and actual manpower projections, have become a critical problem. During the period 1970-77, 11,183 whites purchased their discharge from the force.<sup>45</sup> Measured against intake, this means an effective gain of a mere 118 over the entire seven-year period.<sup>45</sup> Measured against population growth, this signifies a sharp drop in ration in line with the general decline of some 22 percent in police-population ratios over the 1948-78 period.<sup>47</sup> In January 1979 it was estimated that the wastage rate of white policemen was of the order of twenty per day.<sup>48</sup>

Police authorities have responded to this serious situation in various ways including the increased use of the military in tasks of township control. While the military were not used to contain the 1976 Soweto riots, (although it was placed on standby), its presence is characteristic of the various police dragnets conducted in the townships today. The police have also sought to compensate for white manpower shortages by attempting to attract growing numbers of blacks to police ranks. As long as unemployment remains a major



problem for township dwellers, some township-dwellers will continue to see a police career as a channel for mobility. As long as laws restrict urban blacks in their choices in the labor market, they will continue to resign from the police force far less casually than their white counterparts.<sup>49</sup> Yet service in the police offers the average Soweton very little insulation against the racial environment and exposes him to considerable opprobrium in the black community. Black policemen and their families have always faced a variety of physical and socially. With their homes and station houses today a specially marked target for the liberation movements, and with increased racial polarization considerations of this nature will doubtlessly become more salient in decisions to join the police force. Such considerations are already instrumental in dissuading blacks from the force to the point where it depends heavily on black rural rather than urban personnel. For the first time in its history there was a shortfall of black policemen during 1980. This is particularly significant in the light of the fact that due to white manpower shortages almost all policemen in Soweto today, (commanders excluded), are of black racial origin.

In the last analysis, police power in Soweto reflects the role of the police as instruments of political socialization in the townships. Effective law enforcement is more than simply a matter of the technical and human resources integrated into police roles. Over an extended period of time the extent to which police forces can maintain order also depends on the relationships and mutual perceptions forged in the crucible of daily police-community contacts.<sup>50</sup> These contacts are especially important where compliance with political rules on the part of inhabitants of deprived communities is at stake. In these cases it is the police force, more than any other institution, that links central government to the local level, symbolizes political authority, and in so doing provides the ordinary citizen with a basis for

orientation towards the political system.<sup>51</sup>

Police performance can "present political authority with an extensive, continuing and vital opportunity to develop identification with the central government."<sup>52</sup> Yet in South Africa's township areas the police do not regard it as part of their function to develop bonds between blacks and the political system. To the contrary, many have internalized the view that promoting the discomfort of urban blacks fulfills a positive social purpose. This in turn mirrors the fact that the police are responsible for enforcing a doctrine which values the differential political incorporation of blacks and foresees as an ideal situation their disintegration from the polity. If urban blacks are in the metropolises on a transient basis, and if their political future lies apart from South Africa, as apartheid conceives, then it simply makes no sense, least of all to the average white policeman, to expend energies on building black supports for the political system. His task is simply to maintain order until such a time in the indefinite future when the system has been fragmented consonant with the black population realizing their "separate" political aspirations. In practice this rationalizes the police riding roughshod over the sentiments of the township-dwellers: curiously enough, it demands that they do so.

Most blacks in Soweto in any case believe that police work is conducted on dual racial standards of law enforcement. Most also regard the police as an army of occupation in the townships. This perception derives from the tendency of the police to swamp the area at times of civil disturbance, and from the general operating style of the police, where race prejudice blends with perceptions of black hostility to produce dangerously aggressive patterns of behavior. Race brutality is an ingrained feature of South African life. Yet inasmuch

as routine patrol work allows police officials considerable discretion in applying the law,<sup>53</sup> a specific vehicle exists for the average white policeman to displace his intermeshing race and role frustrations upon the subject township population. Many policemen exploit the personal advantages offered by this situation, the result of which is a high incidence of police violence during the normal course of law enforcement, rising to even higher levels in periods of civil disturbance when the constraints on the use of firearms and other "hard" means of control are necessarily lessened. The Sharpsville massacre and the slaughter of Soweto's youth during 1976 are spectacular but by no means abnormal cases in point.<sup>54</sup> Degrading verbal and physical abuse are also routine in the process by which Johannesburg's black population are arrested and arraigned for trial. Today there is no Soweton, irrespective of status, who is immune from the degradation of being subject to aggressive preventative patrol techniques, dragnets and indiscriminate stop-and-search procedures.<sup>55</sup> While it is technically government policy to root out policemen responsible for what is euphemistically termed "racial friction", there are basically no channels through which blacks can seek redress for the humiliation they experience in the daily course of law enforcement.

The inability of the police to function as a positive political force in Soweto is partially a result of patterns of police recruitment and organizational socialization. Police work always develops institutional norms regulating the types of persons joining the profession.<sup>56</sup> Much as in other countries where police careers attract largely members of the lower-middle or working class,<sup>57</sup> the overwhelming majority of recruits to the South African force are drawn from the lower rungs of the white social ladder. Many are lower

class members of the Afrikaner component of the white elite i.e. the social formation in the local pigmentocracy most threatened ideologically and economically by the upwardly mobile urban black communities. A considerable proportion of the force is also underexposed to national political issues, either because of limited education or an insular rural background.<sup>58</sup> This means many policemen bringing to their relations with Sowetons standards and stereotypes politically undesirable, redundant or blatantly offensive in the context of racial transactions within a reasonably sophisticated urban setting. At the best of times white policemen mirror the social climate in failing to distinguish status differences in the urban black communities. When they do, they reserve their deepest aggressions for blacks who have absorbed urban values or have reached relatively high educational or economic plateaux despite the constraints of apartheid. From the standpoint of their racial psychologies, the white police experience considerable difficulty in adjusting to this potentially competitive group whom they take to personify the "swart gevaar" or black peril. Yet, members of this category constitute the political influentials in township circles and their personal negative experiences are quickly and cumulatively generalized out to influence community attitudes towards the police and governmental authority.

Despite the importance attributed to informal police-community contacts in building positive relations by a variety of theorists,<sup>59</sup> South Africa's white policemen are not embedded in the social networks of the black areas. The whole social framework naturally discourages white policemen from crossing racial boundaries to forge associations during the course of their work in the townships, yet the distancing of the police has been furthered by the technologization of police roles in an atmosphere of pervasive racial hostility. At present even the

more routine police patrols in Soweto take on the character of military operations conducted behind barriers of amor and wire mesh festooning police vehicles. A good deal of the communications breakdown between police and township-dwellers has to do with the malicious and discriminatory intent on the part of the authorities. Yet, much has also to do with the failure of most white policemen to develop any familiarity with the people, structure and moods of the black urban area.

Brutal police action in the townships is also a result of the multiracial composition of the force with black personnel under compulsion to indicate organizational loyalty by differentiating themselves, particularly in crisis situations, from the rest of the township community. This produces such levels of violence on the part of the black police that Sowetons generally fear them more than their white counterparts. Yet if the police are today responsible for socializing Sowetons away from the political system - and thereby complicating their own control role - it is also because of the linkages seen by Sowetons between the police and the pass laws. From these laws which is reprehensible but rather their enthusiasm in support of laws which are in themselves bad and violate all known criteria of social justice. This is not to say that the pass laws are the sole cause of social disorganization in the townships. Much has also to do with the "natural" disruption brought about by the processes of industrialization and urbanization. Yet the pass laws aggravate the social pathologies which exist, they give rise to the most flagrant injustices of apartheid and they disrupt the most elementary of human relationships. The inestimable number of "illegals" in Soweto live a life of harassment that is Kafkaesque in its proportions. Yet even those fortunate enough to qualify for

urban status are faced with a harsh and insecure daily existence where the loss of a document, some technical violation of a mass of administrative decrees, or some arbitrary (and often vindictive) stroke of the bureaucratic pen can mean condemnation to perpetual displacement. Women, children, the aged and the handicapped are all from the point of those prosecuting the influx control laws, the police in particular, "unproductive" persons, and therefore most vulnerable to the dangers of deportation.<sup>60</sup>

The present system, supported as it is by police action, also inhibits economic self-improvement, for not only are the fines imposed for pass law violations out of all proportion to the income of economically disadvantaged blacks, but the encapsulation of labor in prescribed areas, so central to the system, makes it extraordinarily difficult for township dwellers, professionals and the unskilled, to sell their talents in the best market.<sup>61</sup> Soweton males who are lucky enough to acquire permission to transfer to other prescribed areas usually experience considerable difficulty in being allowed to move their families with them. By requiring individuals to register for particular industries, companies or occupations within firms, the system also depresses wages and retards progress to better paid and more highly skilled forms of labor.<sup>62</sup>

The police-backed influx control system also, ironically, encourages crime in the townships. As an extensive literature indicates, as long as there are pass laws reducing each township black to an incipient criminal, so township-dwellers are unlikely to develop faith in the law, trust in the political structures from which it derives, or respect for the police in their capacity as law-enforcers. In addition, since influx control tends to concentrate massive arbitrary power in the lower ranks of bureaucratic organs -

the West Rand Administration Board in the case of Soweto - corruption is encouraged in township administration authorities and in police ranks, particularly among black personnel.<sup>63</sup> There is, finally, a mutually reinforcing relationship between influx control and township crime which compounds the breakdown of communication between police and urban blacks. The racial characteristics of South Africa's laws destroy black incentives to obey them and the pass laws encourage crime by blurring the distinction between criminal and statutory violations. Since the police characteristically respond to crime increases in Soweto by enforcing the pass laws more vigorously, influx control and crime lock together in a vicious spiral with the average Soweton caught between the "tsotsis" (township thugs) on the one hand and the police on the other.

From the early nineteenth century the pass laws have formed a backdrop to political disturbances and they continue to be a major source of discontent in the townships.<sup>64</sup> In the 1920's D.D.T. Jabavu pointed to their existence as a leading aspect of dissatisfactions current among blacks.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, the passive resistance campaign of the 1950's leading to the tragedy of Sharpeville drew on the pass system as a specific source of inspiration. Since the pass laws are indiscriminate in their discrimination, demands for their abolition run deep in all quarters of the black community. Small wonder that influx control constitutes a focal point for political resistance cross-cutting both ethnic and class differentials in township society.

From the township point of view the pass laws are the most tangible expression of racial discrimination since they subject blacks to a series of laws carrying a criminal sanction which do not apply to the white community. Many negative racial attitudes in Soweto take their cues from perceptions of the pass laws which have been described as the

greatest single cause of disruptive race relations in South African society.<sup>66</sup> Attitudes towards established authority are conditioned by the pass laws: to many Sowetons the sole purpose of the police and the inflated bureaucratic apparatus of the West Rand Administration Board lies in their role of enforcing the influx control regulations. Since these regulations must be strictly implemented to serve their basic purposes, and since policemen and bureaucrats normally perform their enforcement roles even beyond the letter of the law, harshly and unsympathetically black hostility towards the pass system carries over towards political authority in general. The general tendency of the pass laws to reduce all urban blacks to incipient criminals adds to the diminished respect they have for existing legal and political arrangements.

#### IV THE POLITICS OF SANCTIONS: TOWARDS CHANGE?

The pass laws generate a burning sense of grievance and injustice in the urban townships. These intensifying feelings carry over to the police, and through the police, to support feelings of political illegitimacy which confound government efforts to control the black urban areas by building supports for the status quo within the community. The pass system, and the police in enforcing it, spread humiliation evenly without regard to status differences among urban blacks. In Soweto, and other township areas, this inevitably leads to a sense of communal solidarity and integration essential to the political mobilization of these areas at some time in the future. This has been recognized in various sectors of elite society, who, with a mixture of motives has in recent years come to pressure government to alter the entire influx control system, or even abolish it in the light of its apparent failure to fulfill its essential purpose of halting black inflow to the cities.



An important element in the constellation of forces working towards partially or totally dismantling the pass system are white industrial and commercial interests who believe that the present pattern of arrangements are inconsistent with economic advancement and higher levels of productivity. The prescribed area system, it is posited, hampers the mobility of blacks, while the periodic arrest and detention of pass offenders drains labor from the market. The 1971 Bantu Administration Act which reduced the number of prescribed areas, each under the jurisdiction of a Bantu Administration Board, was, needless to say, welcomed as a move towards rationalization in these circles.

Convictions under the pass laws have, in addition, escalated over the last fifty years, and as early as 1942 the Smit Commission was given to comment upon the tendency of this situation to strain administrative resources.<sup>67</sup> Most white petty bureaucrats have long since become inured to the hardships imposed on the black population by their actions under the pass laws, yet many are also given to complain about the volume of work created by administering the influx regulations as they now stand.<sup>68</sup> This is supplemented in higher administrative circles by a distinctive awareness of the opportunities for corruption engendered by the pass system, and by its ability to promote a bottom-heavy administrative apparatus inhibiting rationalization.<sup>69</sup> There is in addition, amongst elements of the bureaucracy less sensitive to the grand ideological designs of the political authorities, a strong feeling that the influx regulations poison relationships between the civil service and township blacks whose cooperation is needed in carrying out the more routine administrative tasks.<sup>70</sup>

Much of the added pressure for change in the pass system flows directly from political sources including the shrinking white opposition,

the homeland leaderships and even from more pragmatic elements within the Nationalist Party. In the case of the white opposition, arguments favouring change represent a mixture of moral and practical concerns with ethical criticisms more preponderant amongst English-speakers towards the left of the political spectrum. It is this moral lobby, loosely composed of members of the Progressive Federal Party, liberal organizations such as the South African Institute of Race Relations, the Black Sash and the English churches, which most clearly articulates the role of influx control in developing a vast and arbitrary bureaucracy, in shattering elementary human relationships and in encouraging undesirable forms of social behaviour. To the more practically-minded in the white opposition the case against influx control rests on the argument that its elimination or its "tempering with humanity", (to use the ambiguous phrase of the now-defunct United Party), would remove a major cause of black discontent thereby contributing to a favourable climate for inter-racial dialogue. This view has also found some support amongst "verligtes" on the left of the Nationalist Party especially as the intellectual focus of white politics has shifted away from the polarities of pure apartheid and majoritarian democracy towards proposals envisioning a consociational approach to the country's racial problems.<sup>71</sup> Since the creation and cooption of a so-called "stable black middle class" is central to this strategy as it has been defined by the major white parties, there is some support for a system of exemptions, similar to that contained in the 1923 act, whereby selected blacks of higher status would be granted full immunity from the influx regulations.<sup>72</sup> In an important move in this direction it was announced during 1977 that black civil servants, inspectors of schools, principals, vice-principals and ministers of religion would be granted special permission to bring their families into the urban areas.<sup>7</sup>

The case against influx control is also bolstered across the local white political spectrum by the awareness that a considerable proportion of international hostility towards South Africa stems from the dehumanizing impact of the pass laws upon the country's black population. This external consideration tends to add weight to the view that some sort of concessions on the pass issues are imminently desirable. International considerations however also influence the position of the homeland leadership, particularly of the two independent homelands both of which are deeply concerned with diluting their world image as creatures of apartheid. It is recognized that it is important that they be seen to be challenging apartheid as far as their inordinate dependence upon South Africa allows, and because the pass system is widely taken as a measure of the cruelty of apartheid, it is seen as an issue peculiarly appropriate in this regard. Additionally, since the economic underdevelopment of the homelands means that they are unlikely to function as magnets of human attraction even for their indigenous populations for the foreseeable future, an opening of the urban valve could considerably relieve social pressures in the black rural areas, (even at the expense of transferring their population problems to 'white' South Africa.)<sup>74</sup> In homeland circles this fact compounds the argument against influx control despite the caution of the local authorities in becoming too deeply involved in their urban-based ethnic compatriot's political and social problems.

Survey data compiled since 1976 provides evidence suggesting a quite significant white constituency for alteration in the pass system cutting across formal party divisions.<sup>75</sup> This has in its turn prompted the Nationalist government to introduce a number of adjustments in recent years including the establishment of 'aid centres' to which pass offenders are referred in preference to the judicial authorities, exempting certain categories of labour from having their passes signed

by employers on a monthly basis, substituting passes for so-called "travel documents" and exempting holders of the new documents from having to produce them to the authorities instantly.<sup>76</sup> Section 10 blacks have been granted ninety-nine year leasehold rights on land in the urban areas and a number of restrictions on the operation of urban black businesses have been eliminated.<sup>77</sup> There has also been a significant decline in the number of prosecutions and convictions under the pass laws since 1971/72 particularly with increased referrals to the aid centres since 1974. At the same time the standard rationalizations of the pass system remain an integral part of official rhetoric and, more importantly, the basis of the system remain essentially unchanged. Official policy remains unwaveringly committed to the cardinal principle that the urban areas are white areas in which blacks enjoy no permanent rights whatsoever, and in terms of the newly-promulgated Bantu Laws Amendment Act of 1978, (which replaces citizenship with birth as the criterion for blacks to be in white South Africa), the Section 10 privileges of urban blacks, particularly those of their offspring born after their ethnic homelands become independent, are directly threatened.<sup>78</sup> This suggests that intensification of the principle of reserving urban areas for whites so much so that some commentators have speculated that the future is likely to witness removals to the rural sector on a greater scale than ever before.<sup>79</sup>

Official policy apparently does not favour elimination of the pass system: It is concerned essentially with smoothing its administration whilst gratuitously removing the worst indignities of influx control in order to reduce what is politely termed "unnecessary racial friction."<sup>80</sup> Even at this limited level however the technicalities of the new arrangements leave much to be desired.

In practice the provisions of the 1978 act exempting blacks from producing their documents on demand has little to no meaning: were they to be generally enforced the system would be bogged down to the point of collapse.<sup>81</sup> Most blacks are in any event too intimidated by the police to demand their rights in terms of the new provisions and to the extent that they do not do so the police do not consider themselves bound by them. Whether the new aid centres with their dubiously qualified personnel and tedious processes of investigation alleviate the hardships of the system is far from evident.<sup>82</sup>

Despite the hopes in liberal quarters that the new travel documents were a move in the direction of dismantling the pass laws, the new documents are in fact nothing more than passes under a more savoury name reminiscent of the replacement of passes by "reference books" under the act of 1952: the 1978 act extends all of the provisions of that of 1952, it requires the production of identity documents to authorized officers of the law at any time and it carries the same penalties for offenders while increasing those for destroying, altering defacing or forging documents of identification.<sup>82</sup> Penalties for conviction under the pass laws were in fact increased by the Bantu Laws Amendment Act of 1977 in direct opposition to the recommendations of the Viljoen Commission that these laws be decriminalized.<sup>84</sup> There is also evidence suggesting that since the removal of powers to administer influx control from the local authorities during 1971 pass regulations have been applied with greater inflexibility by the centrally-controlled and generally less sensitive personnel of the Bantu Administration Boards.<sup>85</sup> The apparent decline in the number of prosecutions in recent years is not in any case representative of a waning of the system but should rather be seen against a background where the police now take more trouble to investigate cases than

formerly, where endorsements-out tend to be steered through the aid centers rather than the courts, and where political disturbances in the townships since 1976 have made it more difficult for influx control to be systematically enforced.<sup>86</sup>

What is perhaps of the greatest importance is the fact that in black perceptions the pass system has not undergone any change for the better, and this in its turn mirrors the actuality that whatever the constituency for change within the white community it tends to come hard up against a number of forces working towards perpetuation of the present pattern of arrangements. Agricultural interests are certainly to be reckoned with in this regard: they have always regarded influx control as important for assuring labour in the face of competition from the urban market, and this consideration remains important with the decline of the white farming sector during the seventies.<sup>87</sup> The business and mining lobby is also ambiguous in its attitudes, for any hostility towards passes as a constraint on labour mobility is balanced by the historically vindicated realization that they remain an important means to recruit cheap workers from the reserves, for undercutting their economic bargaining power, and, (in combination with the compound system in the mines), for preventing their desertion from service.<sup>88</sup> While some years ago industrialists were inclined to complain that passes inhibited labour supplies, with economic constriction during the mid-seventies they have tended to join the authorities in recognising the political importance of influx control in transporting escalating black unemployment back to the rural areas. For its part the government, while holding fast to influx control and increasing the penalties for illegally employing blacks, has sought to undercut some of the objections on the grounds of labour mobility by promising to further reduce the number of prescribed areas under the Bantu Administration Boards during 1979.<sup>89</sup>

It is unlikely that the homelands will become forceful instruments for change because of the contradictions between their political and economic stakes in the pass system, because their Nationalist Party mentors are unlikely to condone arrangements which will shift population pressures to the white urban areas, and because, in the last analysis, the homeland governments do not have the political weight to induce them to do so. The moral arguments of the fast disintegrating white opposition obviously carry little weight in a political atmosphere defined by its immorality and it is far from obvious that international opinion will be equal to prompting change in the pass system given its political and economic advantages to the white elite. On the contrary, to the extent that it is increasingly argued by whites that it is impossible to placate world opinion except at the expense of their own survival, there is no logic in making any concessions at all. Finally, in preference to any real change the government has sought to relieve the strains imposed by influx control on the administrative system by diffusing responsibility to blacks who are increasingly brought into the lower echelons of the public service, and to the homeland governments. Thus the 1978 act authorizes the homeland governments (with the exception of Kwazulu) to issue the new travel documents.<sup>90</sup> The effect of this move is to lock the homelands further into apartheid, to spread the moral blame of the pass system, and to reaffirm the principle that the political future of urban blacks lies with the bantustans rather than with white South Africa.

In the police force itself there are some elements who have added their voices to the various criticisms of the present influx control arrangements. Some senior police officials have undoubtedly been influenced by the recent report of the Viljoen Commission linking influx control to congestion of the prisons and to high township crime rates.

There is also some appreciation in the higher ranks that influx control hinders the building of positive sentiments in the urban black communities at a time when the country as a whole is confronted with growing internal subversion. This argument is particularly prevalent in security police circles, although it also has support in the uniform section.<sup>91</sup> In the latter, the practical case is also made that the time spent by the police in dealing with petty contraventions of the pass laws detracts from the resources which can be brought to bear on more important common law violations.

Civil disturbances can create pressures for internal change in police organizations,<sup>92</sup> and there are some indications since 1976 of a growing if belated sensitivity to the political importance of bettering police-urban black relations. Some members of the white opposition parties have come to appreciate the political possibilities of the police as an instrument of socialization, and with the 1976 riots producing a number of intra-organizational stresses in the police force, a movement has been set in motion in some quarters to attempt to diffuse the conventional antagonisms displayed by blacks to the police authorities.<sup>93</sup> Acting on the basis that black perceptions of the political system are at least partially conditioned by perceptions of organizational relations within the police force, black promotion into higher officer ranks has been accelerated, and in an effort to enhance police-urban black communication, black officials have been given greater responsibility for police work in the townships.<sup>94</sup> Inasmuch as these exercises in community relations reinforce apartheid's claims to devolve power on blacks in their own areas, diffuse the moral responsibilities for political control and alleviate manpower problems, so much the better. Today, Soweto's police stations are staffed mainly by blacks, (although divisional headquarters remains



under white control), and a large number of stations in the rural areas, particularly in the homelands, are now independently administered by black officials.<sup>95</sup> Preventative police action has also taken the form of initiatives to seek out and foster contact with black community leaders, and although this type of activity is constrained by the depth of black hostility, it has produced some significant if limited returns in some township areas. The extensive and politically embarrassing casualties caused by the police acting to restore order during 1976 has also prompted an examination of riot control equipment and techniques with the purpose of scaling down the use of force in future civil disturbances to a more acceptable minimum. This has resulted in a stronger emphasis on certain "soft" means of riot control which were either unused or unavailable during the recent upheavals.<sup>96</sup>

It is however of importance to emphasize that in the minds of most white policemen socialized into accepting coercion as an integral feature of race relations, the building of a more positive township image is, at best, narrowly conceived of in terms of the simple adoption of these "soft" techniques of control. Shifts towards a communicative approach to police work normally involve structural alterations in police institutions,<sup>97</sup> and this would also explain resistance in South African police circles to "community relations" as it is normally understood i.e. as a non-coercive response to the threat of civil disturbances. The turnover of commissioners-general of police every two years is also important in relation to the fact that there has, to date, been no thoroughgoing reevaluation of the role of the police in influencing race relations, least of all the creation of organizational sub-units specializing in race relations analogous to those found in many United States police departments since the late fifties. This means that while a growing number of white South

Africans pay lip service to the political value of improving the police image in the townships, the majority of actual initiatives remain sporadic and informal. There is, in addition, little to substantiate the view that these discrete efforts have proved successful in diluting black hostility even though the level of political disturbance in the black urban areas has fallen quite considerably since the 1976 riots. Much of this is primarily due to a mixed policy of mass detentions and instrumental reformism rather than to the development of new networks of police-community perceptions.

It would, in the last analysis, be surprising were the police to be enthusiastic or effective in building legitimacy orientations among urban blacks in the absence of change in the structural features and collective psychologies of present South African society. If frequent violence and selective social responsibility remain defining features of police work in the townships it is because the laws are bad, saturated with racial mythologies and geared to the basic political purpose of maintaining white minority power. In addition, despite the development of new forms of racial interaction in many white church, party and business organizations since 1976, very little in the way of liberalization seems to have occurred in mainstream white police psychologies, particularly those of the lower ranks, where the most brutal and insensitive conceptions of race relations remain as resilient as ever. In South Africa the police are a conservative institution even by the standards of the country's white political spectrum.<sup>98</sup> This reflects the broader fact that policemen not only share the ideologies of the power structures that they protect, but tend to do so, by virtue of institutional roles and norms derived from their relationship with the state, with an element

of fervency and fundamentalism setting them apart from most other social groups and organizations. In such circumstances community relations programs worked through the South African police must be doomed from the outset. Similarly, relations between the police and the country's subject racial groups, (and between the latter and the political authorities insofar as they are mediated by police action), will remain in a state of high tension.

#### V CONCLUSION

Two concluding points need to be made in evaluating whether township communities such as Soweto can be ultimately managed through a policy of sanctions and coercion.

In the first place, it is important to emphasize that in the realm of political control the position of the South African police is basically contradictory and, in the long-term self-defeating. This derives from the fact that it is the police themselves, working through the pass system and in other ways, who are responsible for a good proportion of the breakdown of political authority in the townships. Political socialization is always subordinate to the enforcement of law and order in the police hierarchy of values. Yet if social order is to be maintained over an extended period the laws enforced by the police must be regarded as legitimate and police action should avoid fueling popular discontent which is then projected onto the political system. The interactions between the police and Soweto's inhabitants do not meet these standards. They fail to do so because the police force is white-dominated and fail to do so because the police force is white-dominated and geared to the values and interests of the racial elite: these interests and values pervade the institutional norms of the police force, its recruitment

modes and socialization procedures to produce an atmosphere in which the force cannot behave as a neutral law enforcing agent of the whole urban community. Above all, the laws enforced by the police in Soweto, the pass laws in particular, wreak havoc in community life and are entirely unacceptable on any grounds to the township population.

If some theories of urban civil violence are taken at their face value then this situation where blacks regard the police as an occupying army in their section of the community augurs persistent political conflict, between Sowetons and the police and Sowetons and the state. The inability of the state or the police to eliminate or modulate influx control precisely because of its potency as an instrument of political control aggravates the situation. Indeed, the legacy of hostility built of decades of experience with the pass system may now be so intense that remedial action by the authorities would not necessarily be followed by significantly better perceptions of the political system by urban blacks. Nevertheless, it is important not to understate the capacity of the police to hold the line against township protest for the foreseeable future, by brute force if not preventative communication. In the short-term the control value of the pass system outweighs its ultimate disadvantage in disaffiliating blacks from the polity. In the short-term too, the sophisticated technologies integrated into police roles compensates for its manpower shortages. Intra-organizational differences in the police are counter-balanced by integrating forces of racial affinity in the command structure. The existing complex of race and security legislation offers the police force unique opportunities for surveillance and counter-revolutionary action. In the last analysis the police are related by historic tradition and social function to South Africa's so-called "second line of defence" i.e. the military,

whose vast capacities for township control have to date not basically been called into existence. This does not guarantee against revolution emanating out of concentrations such as Soweto for the indefinite future. Yet it does add weight to the view held by a variety of commentators that in the black urban areas "the spectre of police power will prevent the growth of politically inspired activist movements for a long time to come."<sup>99</sup>

FOOTNOTES.

<sup>1</sup> A noteworthy exception is Albie Sachs, "The Instruments of Domination," in Jeffrey Butler and Leonard Thompson (eds.), Change in Contemporary South Africa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975) pp. 223-49.

<sup>2</sup> Works in this genre include E.K. Bramstedt, Dictatorship and Political Police (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1945); Simon Wolin and Robin Slusser, The Soviet Secret Police (New York: Praeger, 1957); Robert Conquest, The Soviet Police System (London: Bodley Head, 1968); United States of America, Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders - hereafter referred to as the Kerner Commission - (New York: Bantam Books, 1968); James Wilson, Varieties of Police Behavior (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968); Christian Potholm, "The Multiple Roles of the Police as Seen in the African Context," Journal of Developing Areas, III, January 1969, pp. 139-158; W. Westly, Violence and the Police (Boston: M.I.T. Press, 1970); A. Reiss, The Police and the Public (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); M. Caine, Society and the Policeman's Role (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973); Peter Rossi, Richard Berk and Bettye J. Eidson, The Roots of Urban Discontent: Public Policy, Municipal Institutions and the Ghetto (New York: John Wiley, 1974); Jerome Skolnick, Justice Without Trial (New York: John Wiley, 1975).

<sup>3</sup> Potholm, p. 139.

<sup>4</sup> Harlan Hahn, "A Profile of Urban Police," Law and Contemporary Problems, 36 (Autumn 1971), p. 456; Rossi et al, p. 139.

<sup>5</sup> An official history of the South African police is still to be written, although L.E. van Onselen's, A Rhapsody in Blue (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1960) makes a superficial attempt to come to terms with this lacuna in the literature. Many standard works on South Africa nonetheless allude to the role of the police in the political system either directly or indirectly. See, inter alia, Leo Marquard, The Peoples and Policies of South Africa (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Pierre L. van den Berghe, South Africa: A Study in Conflict (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970); Heribert Adam, Modernizing Racial Domination (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); and Sachs in Butler and Thompson ibid. The annual reports of the commissioner of police - hereafter referred to as ARCP - of the South African Institute of Race Relations - hereafter SAIRR - are also useful sources of data, while the annual police vote in the House of Assembly provides one of rare occasions when police matters are aired publicly. There is a large "civil rights" literature dealing with the legal framework of police action, including Edgar H. Brookes and J.P. Macauley, Civil Liberty in South Africa (Cape Town: Juta, 1971), Albie Sachs Justice in South Africa (Berkeley: University of California, 1973), and John Dugard, Human Rights and the South African Legal Order (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

Black reactions to the police, particularly toward police behavior in prosecuting the influx control laws, are an almost standard theme in black social and political writing. See, inter alia, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Down Second Avenue (New York: Doubleday, 1959); Albert Luthuli, Let My People Go (London: Collins, 1962); Bloke Modisane, Blame Me On History (London: Thames and Hudson, 1963); Can Themba, The Will to Die (London: Heinemann, 1972).

<sup>6</sup> On the police role in political socialization, see Kerner Commission, p. 3000 and Potholm, p. 142.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Christopher Howe, Employment and Economic Growth in Urban China, 1949-57 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

<sup>8</sup> Prior to the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1952, influx control was applied only if the white municipalities so requested. Even in these cases, women were exempt should they be able to find accomodation in the urban area. See Muriel Horrell, Legislation and Race Relations (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1966). The 1952 Act actually came into force in Johannesburg only in 1959, and in Cape Town during 1963. See Black Sash, Memorandum on the Application of the Pass Laws and Influx Control (Black Sash, Johannesburg, 1971).

<sup>9</sup> South Africa's police-population ratio is low relative to many democratic societies. The rate of 1.3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> per thousand is explicable, according to Potholm (p. 141) in terms of the "amount of social control generated by the entire range of political, economic and social institutions. See also ARCP,



1975/76: RP 45/77, p. 1.)

<sup>10</sup> For the United States experience of this phenomenon see Daniel Bell "Crime as an American Way of Life," in Bell, The End of Ideology (New York: Free Press, 1960).

<sup>11</sup> According to Sachs, "The Instruments of Domination", p. 234, the ratio of white to "non-white" policemen has changed from three to one (in 1912) to one to one (in 1972). On recent recruitment patterns see the annual reports of the commissioner of police and South Africa, Republic of, Debates of the House of Assembly (hereafter, Debates), Vol. 43, May 4, 1973. Col. 5849.

<sup>12</sup> Sachs, Justice in South Africa, p. 240 and Sachs, "The Instruments of Domination," p. 234.

<sup>13</sup> On the structure and composition of the Reserve Police see South Africa, Republic of, Police Amendment Act 53/61: ARCP, 1967/68, RP 47/69, p. 3; SAIRR, 1967, p. 74; ARCP, 1976/77, RP 15/78, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> ARCP 1976/77, RP 15/78, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg), January 26, 1973.

<sup>16</sup> See what we have deemed the "civil rights" literature.

<sup>17</sup> Brookes and Macauley, p. 86.

<sup>18</sup> SAIRR, 1977, p. 114.

<sup>19</sup> Post (Johannesburg) January 15, 1979.

<sup>20</sup> On increases in the annual police budget see Rand Daily Mail, March 29, 1979.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Morris, Armed Conflict in Southern Africa (Cape Town: Jeremy Spence, 1974) p. 292.

<sup>22</sup> The Star (Johannesburg), April 10, 1974.

<sup>23</sup> The annual reports of the commissioner of police indicate a sharp rise in the number of policemen completing counter-insurgency courses since 1967. In June 1976 there were eighteen special riot squads in existence, two in the Johannesburg-Soweto area. Debates, Vol. 64. June 22, 1976, Col 1279.

<sup>24</sup> J.S. Marais, The Cape Colored People, 1652-1937 (Johannesburg, 1957). p. 117.

<sup>25</sup> Transvaal Provincial Report of the Local Government Commission (T.P. Preterria, 1922).

<sup>26</sup> The 1923 act empowered municipal authorities to establish segregated black locations and to deport "undesirable" blacks from the urban areas. See Horrell, ibid p. 2. In addition, see T.R.H. Davenport, "African Townsmen: South African Urban Areas Legislation," in African Affairs, April 1969, pp. 95ff.

<sup>27</sup> Joel Carlson, The Pass System and Detention (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, Topical Talks, no. 24, 1969). The impact of the pass laws on the daily lives of urban blacks is also documented at length in Sheena Duncan, The Flight of the Urban African (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, Topical Talk, No. 23, 1969); in Horrell, ibid; and in the annual surveys published by the South African Institute of

## Race Relations.

<sup>28</sup> The obligation on blacks to carry passes is rooted in the ironically phrased Natives (Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents) Act, 67/1952. See Horrell, ibid, p. 35. The Bantu (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945 is, with numerous amendments, the most important measure regulating the conditions under which blacks can enter and live in the urban areas. For details of this act and its various reformulation see Horrell, ibid, p. 36. In terms of Section 10 of the 1945 act, as amended in 1952, 1955 and 1957, certain blacks may qualify for exemption from the provisions of the act under certain specific conditions. Nevertheless, many blacks fail to exercise these rights, either because they lack documentary proof of their birth or record of employment, or, in the case of women and children, because it is extremely difficult to prove lawful entry into the urban area. For an elaboration of these points see A Survey of Race Relations, 1971 (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1972) p. 148.

<sup>29</sup> Black Sash, ibid; The Star, September 7, 1974.

<sup>30</sup> Bantu Laws Amendment Act, 42/1964; Horrell, ibid. p 39.

<sup>31</sup> Bantu Laws Amendment Act, 19/1970. Horrell, p. 44.

<sup>32</sup> White employers are legally obliged to inspect the passes of their employees and report irregularities to the police authorities.

<sup>33</sup> The Bantu Laws Amendment Act is a good example of the manner whereby increasing numbers of officials of all types become surrogate influx control administrators. See Horrell, p. 39.

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of the 1971 Bantu Administration Act and its consequences for township development, see Philip Frankel, "Municipal Transformation in Soweto: Race, Politics and Maladministration in Black Johannesburg," African Studies Review, Vol. XX, No. 2, September 1979, pp. 49-63.

<sup>35</sup> The Star, October 27, 1977.

<sup>36</sup> Sachs, ibid, p. 240.

<sup>37</sup> Rand Daily Mail, September 13, 1973. In terms of the 1923 legislation all "idle, dissolute and disorderly" blacks could be deported to the rural areas by the local authorities. Under the 1952 amendment to the 1945 urban areas act, the powers of the authorities to remove these blacks was extended. Similarly the 1945 act makes it clear that Section 10 status be limited only to blacks displaying "good conduct". Horrell, pp 35-39.

<sup>38</sup> According to the president of the Black Sash, the present pass arrangements give the police "the ability to arrest people for pass offences when there are no other charges which can possibly be brought against them." The pass laws, it is suggested, are "used for the political control of the whole black population." See Black Sash, Johannesburg Advice Office, Report for the Year Ending

31 January 1977 (Black Sash: Johannesburg, 1977).

<sup>39</sup> The Star, June 17, 1964.

<sup>40</sup> The Star, July 24, 1977.

<sup>41</sup> The failure of some black policemen to enforce the pass laws has much to do with the corruption bred generally in the lower ranks of the bureaucracy by the entire influx control system. See D. Molteno, "Urban Areas Legislation," Race Relations Journal, XXII (2) 1955, pp. 26-35; Rand Daily Mail, April 21, 1977.

<sup>42</sup> Morris, ibid, p. 289.

<sup>43</sup> SAIRR, 1977, pp 2 and 106.

<sup>44</sup> Although the number of English-speaking recruits has doubled since 1967, by 1976/77 Afrikaners continued to constitute two-thirds of the force. ARCP. 1976/77. RP. 15/78. p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> On the matter of white manpower shortage see Rand Daily Mail, February 22, 1979; The Star, February 16, 1979; Debates, Vol. 70. February 1, 1977. Col. 71/72.

<sup>46</sup> Debates. Vol. 69. June 7, 1977. Col. 9432.

<sup>47</sup> The police-population ratio of 1.32 per thousand in 1976 was the same as in 1931. Debates. Vol. 69. June 6, 1977 Col. 9386.

<sup>48</sup> Rand Daily Mail, February 22, 1979.

<sup>49</sup> In 1970/71 for example, only two percent of black policemen had resigned from the force as opposed to 10 percent of whites. Debates. Vol. 43, May 4, 1973. Col. 5838.

<sup>50</sup> Kerner Commission, ibid, p. 312.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 300; Rossi et al, p. 112.

<sup>52</sup> Potholm, p. 156.

<sup>53</sup> Kerner Commission, p. 312. See also Dennis Wenger, "The Reluctant Army: The Functioning of Police Departments During Civil Disturbances," American Behavioral Scientist 16 (January/February 1973), p. 328.

<sup>54</sup> There is no authoritative figure on the number of deaths caused through police action during the 1976 disturbances. There is nevertheless considerable evidence of police brutality. See Ministers Fraternal of Langa, Guguletu and Nyanga, The Role of the Riot Police in the Burnings and Killings in Nyanga, Christmas, 1976. (Cape Town: Mimeograph, 1977).

<sup>55</sup> On the negative impact of these types of patrol technique, see Kerner Commission, p. 303-4 and Rossi et al, p. 151.

<sup>56</sup> Debates, Vol. 43. May 3, 1973. Col. 5830.

<sup>57</sup> Hahn, p. 450.

<sup>58</sup> The education quality of the average recruit has however noticeably improved in recent years. Rand Daily Mail, May 2, 1979.

<sup>59</sup> Kerner Commission, p. 305; Hahn, p. 458; Rossi et al, p. 163.

<sup>60</sup> Sachs, p. 246; Black Sash, ibid.

<sup>61</sup> A Survey of Race Relations, 1967 (Johannesburg:

South African Institute of Race Relations, 1968). p. 136.

<sup>62</sup> Sheila van der Horst, African Workers in Towns (Cape Town, 1964) p. 12; D. Hobart Houghton, The South African Economy (Cape Town, 1967), p. 162.

<sup>63</sup> Rand Daily Mail, April 21, 1977.

<sup>64</sup> M. Edelstein, What Do Young Africans Think? (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1972) p. 111.

<sup>65</sup> D.D.T. Jabavu, "Native Unrest: Its Causes and Cures," Paper read at the Natal Missionary Conference, Durban, July 1920.

<sup>66</sup> Carlson, ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Welsh, David, "The Growth of Towns," in Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson (eds.), The Oxford History of South Africa, Vol II, 1870-1966 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 201. Figures detailing arrests and convictions under the pass laws are provided annually in the surveys of the South African Institute of Race Relations. In 1968, for example, blacks equal to a quarter of the white population were being arrested for pass offences. The Star, April 20 1968. Statistical data over a fifty year period is found in Francis Wilson, Migrant Labor: A Report to the South African Council of Churches (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1972), p. 163 and pp. 232-234.

<sup>68</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>69</sup> The issue of corruption in administration of influx

control is dealt with in Molteno, ibid and in Republic of South Africa, Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Events of 20-22 November 1962 at Paarl and the Causes which Gave Rise Thereto. (RP. 51/63. Pretoria.)

See also Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society, Report of the Law Commission, Law, Justice and Society. (Johannesburg: SPROCAS, 1972) pp. 52ff.

<sup>70</sup> A Survey of Race Relations, 1967 (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1968). p. 137.

<sup>71</sup> On the consociational theme see Sunday Times (Johannesburg), November 18, 1978; The Star, October 20 and 27, 1978; Rand Daily Mail, October 27, 1978; Sunday Times, January 21, 1979; National Party of South Africa, New Political Dispensation for White, Colored and Indian. (Pretoria, 1978).

<sup>72</sup> For the exemptions from influx control under the 1923 act, see Welsh, ibid. p. 198.

<sup>73</sup> Rand Daily Mail, October 27, 1977; A Survey of Race Relations, 1977 (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1978) p. 389.

<sup>74</sup> Wilson, p. 158-159.

<sup>75</sup> Mark en Meningsopnames, Moningspel vir Rapport. (Cape Town, 1976.)

<sup>76</sup> See A Survey of Race Relations, 1977 (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1978), p. 389 and Republic of South Africa, Government Notice 867 (Government Gazette 5549, 20, May 1977).



77 Rand Daily Mail, November 10, 1977: The Star, April 3, 1978: Rand Daily Mail, May 25, 1978.

78 Rand Daily Mail, February 9, 1978: Post (Johannesburg) February 9, 1978.

79 See, for example, John Kane-Berman, Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1978), Chapter 16.

80 Sachs, p. 245: Rand Daily Mail, August 13, 1974: The Star, September 23, 1974.

81 Rand Daily Mail, July 20, 1974.

82 Sunday Times, June 5, 1977.

83 Post, November 7, 1977: Rand Daily Mail, May 29, 1978.

84 On this point see the so-called Viljoen Commission, recently established to investigate conditions in South African prisons.

85 Frankel, ibid.

86 Sachs, p. 245. The so-called "aid centers" do not find employment for blacks in the urban areas: rather, they investigate whether or not they should be endorsed out. From the black point of view the only difference under the new system is that they are deported by an instrument of the state other than the courts. Rand Daily Mail, July 20, 1974: A Survey of Race Relations, 1977 (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1978) p. 387.

<sup>87</sup> See E.H. Kahn, "The Pass Laws," in E. Hellmann (ed.), Handbook on Race Relations (Cape Town: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1949).

<sup>88</sup> It was actually pressure by the Transvaal Chamber of Mines that persuaded the Kruger government of the Transvaal Republic to promulgate pass legislation during the 1890's. Transvaal Chamber of Mines, Annual Report, 1895. pp. 26 and 39.

<sup>89</sup> The Star, April 28, 1978.

<sup>90</sup> The Kwazulu authorities led by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi have refused to be party to the agreement on travel documents concluded between the South African authorities and the homelands on the grounds that it represents no real change in the whole pass system.

<sup>91</sup> Personal communication. See also, Republic of South Africa, Commission of Inquiry into the Penal System of South Africa (Viljoen Commission). RP. 78/1976. Pretoria.

<sup>92</sup> On this point see Wenger, ibid; Gary A. Kreps, "Change in Crisis-Relevant Organizations: Police Departments and Civil Disturbances," American Behavioral Scientist 16 (January/February, 1973) pp. 356-367; Gary A. Kreps and Jack Weller, "The Police-Community Relations Movement," ibid, pp. 402-412.

<sup>93</sup> On the organizational strains induced by the 1976 riots see ARCP, 1975/76. RP 45/77. p. 1. Rand Daily Mail June 2, 1977. On the notion of devising strategies to improve

relations between the police and the township community see Barend van Niekerk, "The Police in Apartheid Society," in Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society: Law Commission, Law, Justice and Society (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1972). Also Debates, Vol. 63. June 21, 1976. Cols 9955/56 and 10054.

<sup>94</sup> In 1977 blacks were allowed to rise to the rank of major for the first time: shortly thereafter, four blacks, two Coloreds and an Indian and African were appointed to this post. ARCP. 1976/77. RP. 15/78. p. 1.

<sup>95</sup> In June 1977, sixty eight stations were under "non-white" command, 56 under blacks, eleven under Colored officers and one under an Indian police official. ARCP. 1976/77. RP. 15/78. p. 9.

<sup>96</sup> Debates, Vol. 66. February 28, 1977. Col. 2388; Rand Daily Mail, June 2, 1977; SAIRR, 1977, p. 111.

<sup>97</sup> Kreps and Weller, p. 411.

<sup>98</sup> Hahn, p. 456 suggests that recruitment patterns and role requirements in police organizations encourage strong conservative orientations. This would appear to be borne out by the South African experience.

<sup>99</sup> Lawrie Schlemmer, "Political Policy and Social Change in South Africa," Paper presented at the Fortieth Annual Council of the South African Institute of Race Relations, 1970.

## CHAPTER VII

### TOTAL STRATEGY: THE URBAN-NATIONAL LINKAGE

#### I INTRODUCTION

In the brief period it has been in power the government of P.W. Botha has preoccupied itself with two domestic issues. Firstly, it has devoted a good degree of time and energy to repairing the public credibility of the ruling National Party in the wake of the so-called "Information scandal". It was this affair with its allegations of government corruption and maladministration in the highest circles that led to the resignation of a number of important officials, including General van den Bergh, head of the Bureau of State Security, Dr. Connie Mulder, Minister of Plural Relations, and, above all, prime minister John Vorster, Botha's immediate predecessor. The term of office of the Botha government is however also hallmarked by its attempts to define and implement a specific counter-revolutionary program to bolster the power monopoly of the white elite and head off black demands for rapid political change. This program, designated the "total strategy", has already produced important changes in the substance and style of government in a fashion with manifold implications for the political system in the foreseeable future.

Although the term "total strategy" appears frequently in government statements to the point where it is now integral to the political vocabulary informing domestic and international discussion about contemporary South Africa, it is still remarkably vague beyond the baseline that it represents a concerted attempt to head off black revolution internally, and Soviet penetration of the Southern African

region on the external front. The result is considerable confusion as to the means and ends of present Nationalist policy. At the level of ends opinions diverge as to whether total strategy is genuinely reformist or whether it represents a rationalized version of apartheid with occasional expedient concessions to liberalization. These different interpretations coincide with attitudes to the Nationalist Party more generally: thus total strategy as perpetuated apartheid in some new and more insidious form is basically the perception of the white left and the leadership of South Africa's subject race groups. Similarly, total strategy as reform is the preserve of Nationalist supporters although cleavage exists between the left and right of the National Party over whether such reform is actually necessary.

Confusion also surrounds the mechanics of total strategy, partially because there is little knowledge available publicly as to who are its formulators and how they figure in the governmental decision-making process, partially because Nationalist leaders have consciously failed to articulate their present policy beyond the point of obfuscating rhetoric. This calculated veiling of policy mirrors in turn the traditional Nationalist penchant for formulating party programs as far as possible away from the view of the party caucus and public eye. At the same time it also reflects intra-party tensions making it politically risky for leaders to commit themselves unequivocally in one direction or another.

Two features of total strategy nevertheless stand out to distinguish it from previous counter-revolutionary exercises on the part of the white minority. In the first place, total strategy is more explicitly counter-revolutionary than any of these previous attempts at counter-revolutionary action. In a certain sense the whole of South African history is a story of counter-revolution centered on the attempts of a

white elite to perpetuate its domination. Influx control, the accretion of police powers, the regulation of black labor and the development of a complex web of security legislation over the last three decades are all recent expressions of a common theme. Yet the accumulation of elite power, (and the parallel movement of South Africa from a mild to essentially authoritarian society), has been neither as consistent nor as conspiratorial as the country's harsher critics suggest. This is basically the dividing line between past and present, between previous Nationalist governments and that of P.W. Botha. The present government works within the tradition of white counter-revolution laid down over decades: yet its efforts are unprecedentedly systematic. It is this specifically conscious concerted and - some would argue - ruthless maturation to link the various mechanisms of white control into a rationalized counter-revolutionary package which sets total strategy apart from previous white exercises in group defence.

To the extent that government rhetoric is taken at face value, total strategy also involves a "new deal" for Soweto and the other black townships. This does not mean that total strategy is singularly and exclusively focussed on the social and political problems of the urban black. It has a foreign policy component in its being designed to head off the perceived international onslaught against South Africa, especially in the form of Soviet imperialism seen to be moving down the continent. On the domestic front it is also concerned with issues rooted in the homelands and the delicate state of relations between the white, Indian and Colored minorities. Yet the core of total strategy lies in the townships. These problem areas at the center of the political system necessitate a "total" strategy many of whose mechanics and objectives are in turn formulated

with an eye to the black urban areas. In practice, the political and economic status of these areas touches on all the multiple facets which observers see as together making up the total strategy configuration.<sup>1</sup> The rationalization of government under Botha, increased muscle for the instruments of state coercion, (i.e. the military and police), the centralization of power in the executive, intensified relations between the public and private sectors, accelerated homeland consolidation and the idea of a tripartite coalition of minorities at the center of a constellation of South African states - all define the work of the present administration while echoing, to different degrees, the issues of the townships.

The black urban areas have become central to the way the Nationalist government thinks and acts at the present moment. This means that total strategy provides a useful prototype to study the linkages often developing between urban politics and national political systems. It is a well-established fact that urban agglomeration generates stress for whole political systems and that urban politics and policy is shaped in turn by values, movements and developments at the national level. Yet despite the existence of many studies indicating how urban political systems contribute to national politics, the precise pattern of reciprocal urban-national linkages is still imperfectly understood.<sup>2</sup>

It is the purpose of this chapter to add to the available information in this important area of urban politics. Its first section attempts to analyze the reasons for urban issues moving from the margins to the mainstream of Nationalist policy bearing in mind some of the unique features of the South African system. Historically the urban black has been adjunct to apartheid's concern with the political and economic development of the homelands. Under

total strategy this has altered virtually to the point of a reversal of priorities. The second section is designed to highlight some of the more important urban-national linkages which have emerged with the townships being upgraded in the hierarchy of governmental concerns. Soweto as a poor community is highly penetrable in the sense of being acutely sensitive to social developments beyond its boundaries. In this central section we focus on the inputs into township life derived from the implementation of total strategy "downwards" from the upper reaches of government. Since total strategy has tended to set in motion a series of forces which mushroom out from the townships to touch virtually every aspect of contemporary South African politics, we also consider the "external" functions of the townships in the wider political system. In the concluding section the viability of total strategy is evaluated with an eye to both cooption as a response to the problems posed by urban areas such as Soweto, and the more general relationship between urbanization and development.

## II THE RISE OF TOWNSHIP ISSUES

For many years urban black issues have been relatively underrated in National Party circles despite the fact that it is possible to trace the intellectual and practical roots of apartheid to the urban rather than rural context. The development thrust of apartheid was nevertheless away from the urban sector of society. Anti-urban ideologies arise for various reasons but there are basically two factors behind apartheid's rural bias. Firstly, until the recent enunciation of total strategy the dearth of attention given the black townships by Nationalist policy-makers derives from the naive yet cardinal principle of apartheid that the urban black is a transient metropolitan dweller with a political future tied to the ethnic rural homelands. Grossly underestimating the ability of industrialization



and urbanization to produce new identity configurations, the original formulators of apartheid never saw the need to think deeply, least of all to plan, for the political existence of the townships outside the framework of homeland policy. These various homelands would apparently resolve South Africa's racial dilemmas and in a fashion never quite clearly articulated provide the means to politically incorporate the black urban areas. In addition, urban blacks have always been denied political representation in the areas where they live. In most other environments national policy is sensitive to the demands of urban populations since the urban areas represent concentrated potential sources of votes and mass pressures. Yet in South Africa this has never been the case except in the negative sense that the visibly growing urban black population has always generated white fear of upheaval. Containing the townships in the interests of order has always been the dominant ethic. Racial conventions and laws inhibit white politicians from crossing the black-white divide to mobilise urban blacks in creating political leverage. The very stuff of politics, bargaining, trade-offs, negotiation and coalition-building between elements in the townships and the national system are conspicuously absent in South African history.

In the course of the last ten years however a mixture of developments in the international system, among the white elite and in the black urban areas themselves have combined to offset the ideological and political factors traditionally consigning urban blacks issues to the periphery of national policy-making.

Firstly, the whole question of South Africa's apartheid policies has remained in the international limelight during the seventies. Both the struggle for a liberated Zimbabwe and the unresolved problem of Namibia has maintained the focus of world attention on South Africa

as the core of regional problems. The Soweto riots of 1976 have however, above all, raised the spectre of racial strife in South Africa in a fashion unprecedented except by the tragedy of Sharpeville sixteen years before. In the intervening period the relative quiescence of the townships assured their low profile before both international and domestic audiences. Yet since 1976 township issues have been brought brutally before world attention to the point where today the international community tends to take many of its cues to developments in South Africa directly from the pattern of events in township areas. From the perspective - to which the Botha government is sensitive - change in South Africa is often inferred from change in township conditions. Similarly, the perceived prospects for revolution tend to rise and decline in International opinion proportionate to the appearance or disappearance of crisis in these urban black areas.

It is ironic that the Nationalist government has become alerted to the critical importance of what happens in such areas as Soweto circuitously through international channels. Nevertheless it is now appreciated in the highest policy-making circles, probably more than ever before, that the urban areas are a component part of the image projected by South Africa to the external world. International pressure on South Africa also continues to be strong while the regional noose, behind which is seen to lie the machinations of Soviet Imperialism, continues to tighten. National policy-makers believe that the country has attained a level of self-sufficiency capable of withstanding all but the most inconceivable of external threats. Yet total strategy is still a response to an apparent total onslaught, and the same policy-makers still see it as imperative that the country maintain, and even expand, its remaining international ties. Exploiting

the strategic significance of the Republic offers one avenue of doing so. But if South Africa is to crystallize her international relationships - with the Western powers in particular - it requires in the post-1976 climate evidence of movement in the direction of racial reform. Visible change in the urban black areas becomes a critical ingredient in the recipe by which South Africa elicits international backing for the prevailing balance of power on the sub-continent.

Urban black policy has in this sense moved to the center stage as a result of foreign policy imperatives. At the same time the last decade has witnessed significant intellectual movements within the white elite itself. According to some interpretations the middle-ground of white politics has disappeared with the elimination of the United Party. From this point of view white politics is polarizing parallel with the widening gap between the races to produce two opposing concentrations, the pragmatists and liberals of the Progressive Federal Party on the one side and the ruling National Party to the right of the spectrum. Yet there is some evidence to suggest that the white elite is in fact solidifying as militant black consciousness presses the flanks of the white left and as sociologically deep-rooted changes in Afrikanerdom result in more "liberal" elements being elevated to positions of prominence in the National Party.<sup>3</sup> In practice, the ideological ties to either apartheid separatism or common society liberalism are today less distinct and much weaker. Since 1976 the English community has moved significantly to the right. The gains registered by the PFP in the 1981 elections have less to do with a liberal resurgence than with a growing conservatism in its leadership which is now opposed publicly to any form of unitary and majoritarian democracy. Apartheid is today apparently "irreversible", race identities are the building

blocks of the future and there is little to no possibility of a truly integrated society.<sup>4</sup> The Afrikaner intellectuals have in their turn made reciprocal concessions by recognizing that industrialization has created networks of racial interdependency which render the grand segregationist aims of apartheid pure fantasy.

"Consensus politics" is the vogue among the white elite at present.<sup>5</sup> According to a recent survey 70.7% of PFP supporters are in favor of the National Party's total strategy.<sup>6</sup> This newfound unity transcending English-Afrikaner divisions bodes ill for black action to push through political change. Yet consensus politics has also initiated a climate of experimental political thinking and intellectual exchanges along the white political spectrum part of which has spilt over to encourage new government perceptions of the problems posed by the townships for South Africa. As white liberalism has sought closer relations with the elite fold so it has paid the price by surrendering its historic commitments to the common society ideal. It has in the process however sensitized Afrikaner influentials, both inside and outside government circles, to the enduring issue of the townships and its centrality to any workable formula for the country's future. This is not to suggest that there is consensus among whites as to how to respond to the problems posed by concentrations such as Soweto. Yet as growing numbers of white liberals have begun to employ the same terminology and assumptions as their erstwhile opponents in apartheid ranks they have contributed to what is today a general recognition, extending to the highest ranks of government, that the urban black factor lies in the very foundation of resolving the country's race problems.

Developments in the townships themselves have fueled this process through which urban black issues take on a higher profile in national policy-making calculations. In many ways black areas such as Soweto

lie beyond the social experience and comprehension of the average white South African. Few have ever entered the townships, few would do so even were it unnecessary to acquire police permission to visit the "reserved" black areas of the major metropolises, and, until fairly recently, few had any real conception of the nature and intensity of township problems. It was the 1976 riots which were, once again, the breaking point. Taking place outside of the direct vision of the elite, their ability to shatter the traditional sense of neglect and complacency was considerably muted. In Johannesburg, minor black demonstrations in the city itself produced far more white trauma than the cataclysmic events in the segregated areas a few short miles away. Yet in a variety of subtle ways the black protests of 1976 made complete reversion to established patterns of perception and action, public and governmental all but impossible.

The events of 1976 failed to shake apartheid to its foundations.<sup>7</sup> Yet they raised the visibility of the townships to the point where it was realized by government that it was dangerous to continue to ignore their problems. The riots indicated pockets of black political energy where none were believed to exist and where any, from the point of view of an elite accustomed to a monopoly of power, were regarded as threatening. The disturbances also indicated a degree of popular discontent in the black urban areas which government came to perceive as requiring immediate action behind its public rhetoric that events were the result of "external agitation". At the same time the conventional responses to the townships rooted in coercion and incremental action were no longer appropriate. With international anger at the indiscriminate killings pitched at a high level, intensified police action was no longer regarded as efficacious, except as a last resort and then at enormous political costs. The task, as recognized by total

strategy, was to veil the more identifiable forms of coercion and streamline black demands on the system under a more refined if slightly raised ceiling of domination. Such an objective would require a carefully coordinated national policy. In addition, since the 1976 riots revealed that black demands were pitched at the national rather than local level, the casual administrative responses of the past were rendered inadequate. Behind the critique of bantu education lay a rejection of the political system. To appease the townships, it was appreciated perhaps more than ever before, required national policy-making action.

### III TOTAL STRATEGY AND TOWNSHIP POLITICS

Total strategy has involved changes in the substance and style of government. In terms of style this was very much mirrors the personalities surrounding prime minister Botha.<sup>8</sup> All are essentially organization-minded men with a management approach to social problems. The result is a greater emphasis on planned, rationalized and synchronized policy-making than at any time prior.<sup>9</sup> Expertise and specialized knowledge have been upgraded relative to party loyalty in the policy-making process and there is greater receptivity to academic advice from all quarters.<sup>10</sup> The language and symbols of government have also changed. Total strategy is technically labelled the Security Management System,<sup>11</sup> the homelands have been transformed into "black national states", apartheid is now "multinational development" and South Africa's race problems are now, according to the Botha government, a matter of pseudo-scientific-sounding "vertical differentiation."<sup>12</sup>

Shifts in style and terminology are paralleled by efforts to rationalize the South African bureaucracy.<sup>13</sup> "Effective decision-making" and "pure administration" figure as phrases in the so-called

Uppington Principles taken by most commentators to define the Botha platform.<sup>14</sup> Steps have been taken to reverse the massive expansion of the public service brought about over the years by the institutionalization of apartheid. During 1979, despite rumblings of discontent from vested bureaucratic interests, the number of government departments was drastically cut in an effort to eliminate duplication and reduce the ability of the civil service to frustrate executive policy.<sup>15</sup> The Department of National Education and Training, the main arm of bantu education, has been absorbed into a scaled down Department of Cooperation and Development.<sup>16</sup> The administration boards, the main contact point between government and urban blacks, are in the process of being reorganized along lines suggested by the Riekert Commission.<sup>17</sup>

These developments are already in the process of affecting the black townships such as Soweto in a number of subtle ways. The articulated use of specialized manpower at the highest levels of government tends to stimulate the visibility of Soweto as a public issue, not in the negative sense of the townships as a boiling cauldron of discontent, but, more positively, as an acute social problem demanding management if South Africa is to proceed forward in a reasonably orderly fashion. This is not to say that Soweto no longer stirs visions of "black peril". However, the general tone of the Botha government's approach to the urban black issue is distinctly devoid of the racial histrionics accompanying Nationalist attitudes of the past. One may conjecture that there is a possibly greater appreciation of the actualities of Soweto and an inclination to prefer treatment on a calm diagnostic basis. According to some commentators, this new climate will assist the transmission of decisions from the center to the field, transforming the various administration boards, such as WRAB into an effective arm

of government with an unprecedented capacity to contribute to township development.

It is however important to treat this positive scenario with circumspection. Firstly, it tends to gloss over the inevitable contradictions between rational policy-making and the variety of subjective "non-rational" factors intruding on all forms of policy-making activity. Rational policy and ideology can run counter to each other, particularly in circumstances such as those posed by Afrikaner nationalism where commitments to traditional values and ideologically-colored goals remain enduring if no longer perfect. Even if these commitments are diluted in the coterie of specialist advisers surrounding the prime minister, Botha remains responsible to an electorate still inclined to see politics through heavily tinted racial spectacles. The general election of 1981 attests to the considerable size of this group and its accumulating power in the ranks of Afrikanerdom - if not necessarily in the National Party itself. In the circumstances, while government may claim to be adopting a new management philosophy in relation to the black urban areas, there is sufficient tension between what is socially necessary and politically feasible to cancel these claims being brought into operation. For the foreseeable future, contradictions between stated aims and applied policies will continue as the new breed of government technocrats tries to break free of ideological and electoral constraints in the process of "managing" township problems. There are unlikely to be any dramatic breakthroughs or concessions on the township front: efforts to upgrade them economically and politically are likely to be attenuated and cautious.

The planned future which total strategy conceives for Soweto and other black urban areas will also be mediated by the tendency of



bureaucratic institutions to resist change, their preference for standard operating procedures and their capacity to confound central government policy through their interpretory and implementary functions. Rationalizing South Africa's public service is an extraordinarily difficult task, not only because of its size and complexity, but also because of its role in providing sheltered employment for the economically redundant sectors of white society. Because of the historic association between capital and the English segment of the white elite, this sector is largely composed of Afrikaners who monopolize the lower and middle bureaucratic ranks and who can be expected to oppose any policies to reduce the size of the civil service, to promote new modes of operations, or to eliminate legislation justifying the existence of various bureaucratic institutions. From the point of view of any Nationalist government, even one as forceful as that of Botha's, bringing about these changes is a politically explosive issue, irrespective of their urgency in relation to township development.

In practice, the new spirit of planning and specialization evident in the top ranks of government has experienced considerable difficulty in filtering down to such field organizations as WRAB who continue to work along lines sanctioned by past experience. In Soweto the housing crisis is worsening precisely because of bureaucratic resistance from the grass roots up to the middle levels of the Department of Cooperation and Development. Ministerial talk of alteration in the influx control laws have generated considerable anxiety among administration board officials many of whom depend upon the pass system for their work and livelihood. In Soweto today, prosecutions under the pass laws bear little relation to changes designed to modulate their social impact by the governmental center. Ministerial urgings that the pass system be applied with "discretion" are simply ignored. Changes in the pattern of pass law prosecutions in the

Johannesburg area have less to do with the emergence of a new breed of sensitive white officials than with the fact that many administration board officials now see it as more convenient to harass "illegal" Sowetons under Group Areas legislation.

In these circumstances, commitments to a more carefully managed and articulated brand of township policy in the upper reaches of government, does not translate into any material alleviation of the harsh conditions under which Sowetons are forced to live. In addition, while total strategists refer to "pure administration" on the one hand, they intensify the framework of coercion and control on the other. Under the Botha government considerable, and undoubtedly specialized, attention is given to both expanding the police and military, to resolving the problems of recruitment faced by both state agencies and to equipping each with advanced technologies adaptable for use both internally and externally.<sup>18</sup> According to a White Paper on defence tabled in parliament in April 1979, increased numbers of blacks, Indians and Coloreds are to be conscripted into the defence force with the goal of doubling its permanent members by the end of 1981.<sup>19</sup> Black "national" units have been formed in strategic homeland areas in a fashion which will free some white units for internal use. Both police and military budgets have been expanded. In 1979 spending on defence rose for the first time to over R2 billion: roughly a quarter of this, R556 million, was allocated to landward defence.<sup>20</sup>

On the whole, the political role of the military has expanded under total strategy, a term in itself riven with military connotations. The notion of a "total strategy" is, in effect, an "invention" of the South African military, derived largely from its experience in the Namibian anti-guerilla war.<sup>21</sup> In this theatre, where it was termed

"total war", strategy meant complementary political and military action, the one to eliminate popular grievances along "hearts and minds" line, the other to stifle the residue. Personal relations between General Malan, erstwhile head of the defence force, and Botha, have always been good. Close liaison was a hallmark of the period when Botha was Minister of Defence, and with his elevation to the prime ministership, Malan has been drawn out of military ranks, appointed in turn as Minister of Defence, and emerged as one of the prime minister's closest advisers. It is through this important personal connection that the political influence of the military is channelled.

Whether the government now takes its cues from the military rather than the National Party, as suggested by some party dissidents, is a matter of contention. Yet it is indisputable that under total strategy the lines dividing the civil from the military sector of society have become obscured with the latter emerging with unprecedented importance in the policy-making arena. The military are today represented on all the planning committees of the Botha administration including the Department of the Prime Minister and the pivotal State Security Council.<sup>22</sup> It is common knowledge that military intelligence has supplanted the civilian Department of National Security (formerly the Bureau of State Security) as the country's foremost intelligence-gathering mechanism.

These developments are directly relevant to government policy in the black urban areas in numerous ways. Firstly, massive investment in expensive military hardware cuts into the public finances available for their development. The rhetoric of the Botha government may refer frequently to a "new deal" for urban blacks with all its connotations of socio-economic improvement. Yet as long as the

military is in an increasingly prominent position to influence the distribution of government energies and monies the Botha administration will once again face the problem of translating its promises into substance. The fact that it is acutely sensitive to the military argument that the "total onslaught" is essentially externally-based and tied to the Soviet presence in the sub-continent, compounds the credibility problem facing total strategy in the townships.

The attention lavished on the military (and police) also points to the fact that the Botha government has not reduced its reliance on the instruments of brute coercion in township control despite its recognition of the need to tone down visible coercion as an aspect of policy. The implementation of total strategy has not meant a diminution of police action in Soweto. The means of riot control may have softened in the light of the 1976 experiences. The more important political detainees from the townships are also apparently treated with more delicacy following the international publicity given the death under police interrogation of black consciousness leader Steve Biko. Yet the police dragnet remains a characteristic feature of township life. With increased sabotage on the part of the underground movements over the last two years, road-blocks and body-searches of Sowetons on the main Johannesburg-Soweto highway are now regular occurrences. What is of even more significance is increased military participation in these exercises, euphemistically dubbed "crime swoops". This suggests the likelihood of the military being used to quell - or at least assist in quelling - future township disturbances.

The relationship between the Botha government and the military is essentially symbiotic and reciprocal. As the civilian authorities concede their soldiers a greater role in policy-making, (backed up by

healthy financial inducements), so it anticipates their becoming more deeply involved in internal control functions. Yet South Africa's military apparatus also feeds the management spirit of total strategy and, on the basis of its own experience in the conduct of wars of liberation, projects the recipe of military and political action as a force for order into the highest government circles. In present day policy-making the military occupies an essentially ambiguous position. On the one hand it projects values of force and order into government reactions to township problems reflecting its own organizational ethos and function in society. On the other, the military is a peculiarly pragmatic and rational element in the configuration of institutions and interests brought to bear on central government policy. While it may not be a force for liberalization, there is evidence suggesting that some of its leading generals have been instrumental in encouraging the present climate of adjustment and adaptation.

The military input into policy-making under total strategy is an important factor in the various constitutional and governmental reorganizations taking place under Botha and forming the backdrop to his urban black policy. At least as far back as the mid-sixties certain elements in the National Party have argued in favor of dismantling South Africa's Westminster-style constitution and replacing it by arrangements concentrating power in the executive.<sup>23</sup> While differences exist over the uses of such a system - verligtes envision a strong reformist presidency, verkramptes a dictatorship in the service of pure apartheid - the military, with their inclinations to hierarchy, have added weight to this notion of a strong executive, relatively independent of parliament and armed with extensive powers of patronage.<sup>24</sup> Botha himself is renowned as an admirer of De Gaulle and Salazar,<sup>25</sup> and in designed what it terms its "plan for national

survival" his administration has introduced major changes into South Africa's parliamentary structures. The Senate, for example, has long been regarded as a redundant body, both in the National Party, and increasingly in recent years, by the white parliamentary opposition. In consequence, following the 1980 recommendations of the Schlebusch Commission established to inquire into the constitution, the legislature has become unicameral with the Senate displaced by a 60-member President's Council, composed of white, Indian and Colored "specialist members" responsible to a president, appointed by him and directed to advise him on any matter of public interest.<sup>26</sup> The Schlebusch Commission also recommended the conversion of the legislature into a partially appointed body. In future, twelve legislators will be appointed, four by the State President, eight by each of parliaments three white parties in proportion to their strength in the legislature. This move which violates the democratic principle of public accountability establishes a precedent for the Nationalists to "pack" the House in the future. Since the electoral system is thoroughly majoritarian it also creates an artificially inflated government majority.<sup>27</sup>

The mechanics of policy-making - urban black policy included - are clearly becoming more centralized in a fashion convincing the majority of blacks that the system is moving in an even more authoritarian direction. The complete reorganization of the cabinet system into a private, tightly-controlled network centered on the State Security Council reinforces this impression.<sup>28</sup> The creation of the President's Council when viewed from the townships provides little reason for optimism or celebration. As an appointed and advisory body excluding black participation it has been almost unanimously dismissed as irrelevant by Soweton leaders and influentials including township

moderates many of whom anticipated that the constitutional reorganizations vaunted by the Nationalists over the last four years would at least indicate some appreciation of black political demands pitched at the national level. The meagre response of government to these expectations has confirmed the opinions of township cynics while undercutting moderate ranks. It is now very difficult for any Soweton political leader to reject the persuasiveness of the radical argument that dialogue with government is fruitless. By the same token Nationalist immobilism on the political future of urban blacks has worked to the advantage of such organizations as the Soweto Action Committee and, above all, an increasingly influential AZAPO. Both now argue along ANC lines that the dismantling of apartheid - indicated by the abolition of passes or the freeing of political detainees - is a minimum precondition to any negotiation. Both also reject a possible national convention to sort out the race problems of the country as proposed by the PFP, the Black Sash and South Africa's remaining liberals.

Township attitudes towards the President's Council are not shared by verligtes in the National Party who regard the new body as a significant advance in the history of local politics and race relations. The more "radical" among them clearly prefer a formula catering to black demands for inclusion, yet even this group praises the Council as an important institutionalized mechanism for consultation between the races. Despite its advisory character, it is argued, it will carry considerable weight in governmental deliberations. This is because its "specialist" character coincides with Botha's personal preference for managerial-type politics. As an appointed body it also need not be constrained in its debates and recommendations by electoral considerations. Nor for that matter need its composition be seen as immutable. Although the chairman of the Council, Vice State President

Alwyn Schlebusch has rejected black participation in principle, some government statements have been interpreted by verligtes to imply that the Council will itself decide on the question of black membership.<sup>29</sup> This reinforces their belief that the body will evolve into a genuinely multi-racial institution incorporating both urban and rural blacks, either directly as members of the main body, or more deviously, in some associate institution to be consulted on all facets of Council policy.

This optimism may not be justified. Whether the Council can ever emerge as a means to bring Soweto and similar urban black communities into the national power grid is not at all apparent. As much else in contemporary Afrikaner politics, the critical factor is the ability of verligte Nationalist leadership to resist conservative pressures opposed irrevocably to any institutionalized form of inter-racial consultation apart from that sanctioned by apartheid in the form of dialogue between "white" South Africa and its "independent" black homelands. The present design of the Presidential Council, (i.e. a primary body of representatives of the three minority race groups linked to a number of specialist committees), is in fact a diluted version of an original proposal to establish a two-tier system consisting of the current council and a subsidiary Black Council to be consulted on matters affecting the black population. Even though it is apparent that this black body would be an inferior institution, and despite the fact that it was to be non-elective and limited in membership to the non-independent homelands, the plan has hastily withdrawn in the face of right-wing Afrikaner criticism after a brief public airing. In these circumstances, the sensitive issue of political rights for urban blacks seem to be well beyond any Council agenda.

The ideological barriers against bringing urban blacks into the



the national power grid are, it seems, too formidable to allow total strategy to experiment with any form of political organization allowing township dwellers political leverage at the highest levels of central government. Whatever the degree of flexibility displayed by the present Nationalist government it does not extend to allowing blacks, urban or rural, to take decisions affecting the political interests of the white minority community.<sup>30</sup> This principle at the core of apartheid theory remains inviolable, pristine and sacrosanct. Debate over these issues does not even feature in the mainstream of current argument between Afrikaner conservatives and National Party verligtes. The latter are in fact still fighting a desperate rear-guard action in defence of the far more limited notion of Indian and Colored participation in the politics of white South Africa.

The Botha government is nevertheless sensitive to the fact that homeland institutions may no longer be appropriate channels for urban blacks to feed political demands into the system, least of all in circumstances where the individuals involved are, like so many Sowetons, born in the urban area, work there and conduct the majority of their social transactions within its context. In contrast to previous Nationalist governments who have been inclined to accept the notion of the urban black as transitional without question, the Botha government has shown considerably more realism. It has not attempted to wish away the presence of millions of metropolitan blacks as a temporary and reversible sociological aberration, but has, more positively, if with some reluctance, accepted their presence as a permanent feature of the city environment. The present government is also more receptive to the argument articulated by township influentials, in Soweto and elsewhere, that significant numbers in the community neither identify with the ethnic homelands nor could accept homeland citizenship

with its implicit surrender of claims to wider South African status.<sup>31</sup> Above all, for reasons we have indicated, township questions have shifted dramatically from the margins to the center of policy concerns under the Botha administration.

Total strategy is essentially caught on the horns of a dilemma which mirrors the growing tension between apartheid idealism and the unavoidable social actualities of present day South Africa. It cannot admit the predominance of the latter as criteria for policy without endangering the entire paradigm through which Afrikanerdom has over the last three decades forged racial power. Nor can it hope to treat the political problems of the township effectively without preconditionally admitting the fact that the urban black is an integral element of the metropolises with claims to political power pitched nationally and apart from the homeland framework. The result is a political program for urban blacks seeking to satisfy sacrosanct principle and social reality simultaneously: as the two diverge, policy lurches from the one set of imperatives to the other. The result is a policy far less coordinated, integrated and set in its purposes than its name deserves: total strategy is a mass of internal contradictions and irreconcilable tensions which spill out far beyond township boundaries to produce unanticipated consequences, issues and problems for South African society in its entirety.

Any effective urban strategy, total or otherwise, must in the first instance come to terms with a number of quasi-juridic yet politically explosive concepts linking South African citizenship with black participation and identity. Apartheid has aspired to fragment South Africa along ethnic and racial lines. Urbanization however has produced identity patterns among many blacks which no longer conform to those anticipated in apartheid doctrine. This means that if total strategy is in any way to contribute to defusing township tensions it

will have at the outset to devise a concept of citizenship relevant to the new breed of urban black substantially beyond the now redundant belief that his political rights and duties are indissolubly tied to place of ethnic origin. Verligte Nationalists concede this even though it is hopelessly impolitic for them to advocate the extension of South African citizenship to urban blacks at this point in time. Nevertheless they have moved publicly towards accepting township-dwellers who qualify to be in the urban areas under existing laws as a special social category somewhere legally between South African citizenship on the one hand and homeland citizenship on the other.<sup>32</sup>

The notion of urban blacks as dual citizens raises some tortuous logical and sociological problems. Yet dual citizenship is regarded increasingly by the constitutional experts of the Botha government, particularly the Constitutional Commission of the President's Council, as the best means to treat township demands for national political recognition while circumventing the principle that blacks cannot participate legitimately in white politics. The Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act already provides dual citizenship for urban blacks, such as in the application for South African passports, and could easily be adapted in the wider context where they are concurrently members of both South African and homeland society. A special commission, the Nieuwoudt Commission, has actually been established to investigate the practical implications of a dual citizenship system. It seems likely to recommend its adoption modelled on a series of hairline distinctions between "citizenship" on the one side and "nationality" on the other.

It is important to emphasize that the whole debate over urban black citizenship is still set within the non-negotiable framework that South Africa's various race groups maintain separate political institutions

and identities. Even on the left of the National Party power-sharing between the races in a unitary system remains anathema. Yet within these parameters and behind repeated government statements that the political future of the urban blacks remains linked to the homelands there is a distinctive appreciation of the alienation experienced by urban blacks as they are stripped systematically of their South African citizenship. The result today is a far more intensive and creative exploration of the various ways to accommodate the political aspirations of township dwellers without violating "pure" apartheid. There are, in particular, no apparent ideological strictures on inter-racial consultation as opposed to power-sharing at the national level. Nationalist verligtes have capitalized on this to advance the notion of a modified consociational formula by which "white" South Africa, (incorporating Indians and Coloreds), the independent homelands and urban blacks come together in some sort of tripartite policy coordinating arrangement.<sup>33</sup> The precise features of such an arrangement are not yet clearly articulated, essentially because consociations of any type do not rest easily in right-wing Nationalist circles. The fate of the Party's 1977 consociational proposals, gradually whittled to nothing in the face of right-wing pressure, alerts verligtes to the importance of keeping their long-range proposals as obtuse as possible. Yet it is clear that what is envisioned is not consociation in the normal sense of different cultural groups coming together within a single state to hammer out common policy. What is being proposed under the rubric of "multinational vertical differentiation" is basically a consultative body in which three sovereign units inform each other of the policies pursued unilaterally in their separate areas. While each is obliged to advise the other of its actions, none, either singly or in combination with another, can impose its will on the others.<sup>34</sup>

This very limited arrangement leads some commentators to describe verligte proposals as confederal rather than consociational. Government pronouncements in turn refer to a "constellation of states" where urban blacks who cannot be accommodated in the "national states" i.e. the ethnic homelands, are granted representation in their own right. What is particularly interesting is that behind the varied terminology the lines between foreign and domestic policy are being drawn tighter than ever before. The constellation of Southern African states originally conceived of by the Botha government was originally motivated by foreign policy requirements, particularly the desire to lock the former High Commission Territories, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and even Zaire more firmly into the South African economic and military orbit. Yet as the realizability of this conception has been whittled away by developments in neighboring territories, especially in Zimbabwe, so the original model has been tailored drastically down to a constellation of South African states coterminous with the boundaries of the present Republic.<sup>35</sup> In the process the constellation has come to be interpreted as a means to bring white South Africa, its homelands and its urban blacks into an "international" arrangement.

These contorted maneuvers point to the quite exceptional lengths to which the formulators of total strategy are prepared to go in order to cater to the black urban areas by steering around the sacrosanct principles of apartheid. More theoretically, the whole consociation-confederation-constellation exercise shows how managing a limited urban problem can mushroom out even to mingle with issues in the foreign policy realm. In reality, politically incorporating the townships through this exercise generates consequences reverberating throughout the entire political system.

In the first place, the proposed arrangement assumes that there exists a profusion of independent homelands. Ironically, therefore, the political future of urban blacks becomes in some way tied to the homelands accepting "independence". Homeland independence is consistent with apartheid. Yet there are two problems today which must be overcome if the Nationalists are to set their tripartite policy into operation. One derives from the fact that while three homelands are now independent, with the Ciskei shortly to be the fourth, it is not at all self-evident that the remaining homeland leaders, Chief Buthelezi in particular, will acquiesce to apartheid depriving them of their common South African citizenship. These homeland leaders derived political leverage from the fact that independence cannot be forced upon them. It is therefore imperative that total strategy devise a system of incentives making homeland independence an attractive option in its own right. Beyond this however, total strategy faces the additional problem that the homelands already independent, particularly the Transkei, have displayed an unanticipated degree of political self-assertiveness within the framework of their economic dependence on South Africa. It cannot be taken as a foregone conclusion that they would welcome returning to the South African fold even as autonomous units in a loose regional structure. This means that total strategy must devise contingency plans to prevent a repetition of these circumstances in the case of the remaining non-independent homelands while building mechanisms to assure that the already independent "national states" stray no further from the dominant South African heartland.

Total strategy in relation to the homelands is essentially contradictory. On the one hand it pushes the homelands to independence in a fashion satisfactory to apartheid purists: on the other it seeks

to intensify the economic fibres binding the black periphery areas to the white core of the system. In building incentives to independence, development assistance to the homelands has been increased and government has hinted at the possibility of departing from the criteria for the distribution of land between black and white South Africa contained in the 1936 Land Act.<sup>36</sup> A special commission, the Van Der Walt Commission, has been directed to investigate redrawing proposed homeland boundaries in the interest of creating viable political and economic units. Should it recommend major reallocations of land, as is widely anticipated, it will add to the patronage resources of the various homeland leaders and stimulate their client relationship with white central government.<sup>37</sup> It will also add weight to the argument that South Africa is rapidly decentralizing. Yet total strategy for the homelands also displays centralizing features. Current national development planning has essentially discarded the Verwoerdian notion of separate homeland mini-economies. Today the watchword is the "interdependence" of South Africa and regional planners look forward to a series of inter-locking developmental arcs cutting across homeland boundaries and centered in "white" South Africa.

These various developments are at least in part rationalized by the requirements of the tripartite consultative plan envisioned by total strategy. If it is to have practical meaning as a means to incorporate urban blacks "nationally", or for any other purpose, it demands regulated yet independent homeland participation. In the last analysis however, if the proposed formula is to get off the ground at all, it requires acceptance, or at least acquiescence on the part of township blacks who alone can provide the personnel for the urban black "unit" in the system. In Soweto and the other township

communities total strategy is therefore concerned with illuminating the advantages of cooperation with the proposed scheme and the disadvantages of not doing so.

The Nationalists have, with the exception of its right-wing, conceded the permanence of the urban black in the process of creating a township climate receptive to its constitutional proposals. Commitment to what is deemed a "just dispensation for urban blacks at the local level" flows from this concession.<sup>38</sup> This has two implications. Firstly, it involves the socio-economic development of the townships to create the basic infrastructure of social services and facilities in which communities such as Soweto have been historically deficient. The ultimate aim of the Botha government is, according to its rhetoric, to transform Soweto from its present dormitory status supplying labor to adjacent Johannesburg into a fully-fledged city in its own right. To this end a number of special regional committees have been established to investigate the general position of urban blacks and recommend a new social and political dispensation.<sup>39</sup> On the basis of reports by these bodies composed of community leaders and officials, and of those of a tandem cabinet committee, a Greater Soweto Planning Authority has been created under Louis Rive, one of South Africa's most respected civil servants and development planners.<sup>40</sup>

Because of decades of neglect the backlog of social demands made by places such as Soweto on central government's technical, organizational and financial resources creates enormous stress. The central authorities are also sensitive to the political risks of upgrading townships in "white" South Africa with "white" public monies.<sup>41</sup> Both factors have induced the Botha government to cement relations with the private sector which is today regarded in government circles as a critical assisting component in Soweto's development. There have always been strong links between apartheid policy as enunciated by



Afrikanerdom and the interests of English capitalism: each has interpenetrated the other throughout South African history. Yet, with the progressive embourgeoisement of Afrikanerdom and the accumulation of Afrikaner capital since Sharpeville a climate, probably more favorable than ever before, has been created for a more explicit and deeper coalition between English business and Afrikaner government.<sup>42</sup>

From the point of view of the Nationalists this relationship carries certain political costs. Integrating the human and material resources of the private sector into township development runs the risk of generating charges of "conspiracy" on the part of Afrikaner conservatives historically suspicious of the political motives of English business, particularly those of the large corporations. The political rhetoric of the Herstigte National Party during the 1981 elections dwelt, significantly, not only on the theme that current Nationalist policy compromises white racial interests, but the class interests of the white worker as well. The private sector itself has always regarded government intervention in the economy in support of apartheid as a constraint on production, profit and access to an expanding black consumer market.<sup>43</sup> It is thus in the process of exacting a price for cooperation paid in the form of policy changes in relation to labor, job reservation and private sector investment. Many of these changes touch on the core of apartheid so that total strategy is placed in the invidious position where managing township problems with private sector assistance can only be accomplished with some rollback of apartheid - with all the attendant political costs emanating from the Nationalist Right. The government-appointed Wiehahn Commission has nevertheless recommended a review of restrictive labor legislation and, much to the delight of business, legalized certain black unions in the interest of effective worker-

management communication. The Riekert Commission has proposed the opening of racially reserved trade areas to all groups, (much to the anxiety of the small and relatively uncompetitive Soweton business community)<sup>44</sup>. The Uppington principles have emphasized free enterprise as the basis for financial and economic policy.<sup>45</sup> There are general moves afoot to deregularize the economy through new price, rent and exchange controls and a definite tendency away from state to private investment. Government, it seems, is willing to pay the price demanded by business as part of its involvement in total strategy as applied to upgrading the black urban areas. From the perspective of business, there is, according to the view expressed by the chairman of Anglo-American at a "summit" between business and government in Johannesburg towards the end of 1979, a "new era" in mutual relations.<sup>46</sup>

Policies designed to promote urban development normally display both an economic and political component.<sup>47</sup> On the political front the present government is at work to give substance to the important principle contained in the 1977 Community Council Act that urban blacks are permanent features of the white metropolitan environment. Institutionalizing this fact in administrative and political structure in Soweto has involved the transfer of various powers from the West Rand Administration Board to the elected black Soweto Community Council. Today strategy ultimately envisions the Soweto Council as a fully-fledged municipality similar to present white local authorities but with special powers of access to central government.<sup>48</sup> This elevation in status will, it is calculated, resolve a number of outstanding problems. Firstly, it will legitimate shifting responsibility for discontinuities in township life from the white administration onto the shoulders of an elected black body. It will also institutionalize black political participation, creating an illusion of progress while

directing political energies into local channels. Above all, an extended version of the present community council in Soweto will, with similar developments in other townships, create the actual units for urban black political representation at the "national" level i.e. in the constellation/confederation of South African "states". There is still little clarity as to whether the urban black component of the proposed constitutional rearrangement will be made up of an association of community councils or the various councils in their individual capacities. It is the councils, nevertheless, which will provide the mechanics. Thus the Black Community Development Act has already extended full municipal powers to the Dobsonville and Diepmeadow sub-municipalities of Soweto.<sup>49</sup>

In South Africa itself there is considerable disagreement over the purpose and viability of these various urban black policies. In government circles they are taken as indicating a major re-evaluation of the political importance of the townships. Outside these circles the new movement is often more pessimistically seen as a hopelessly late and essentially inadequate time-buying series of exercises designed to shore up a heritage of centuries-old discrimination. Neither of these interpretations is entirely untrue. On closer inspection, however, total strategy for urban blacks represents a carefully calculated attempt to exchange economic and political rewards for their compliance with what is, in the last analysis, a slightly modulated version of the present system clothed in new obfuscating constitutional structures. It is, in short, an elaborate and rationalized version of decades-old apartheid control. At the same time, total strategy does represent an important shift beyond the crude technique of containing the black urban areas through the exploitation of ethnic tensions within them. As so much else under the Botha government where the old and familiar takes on new expression, so the tactics of divide and

control also take on new, subtle and more invidious form.

Controlling the black townships in the context of total strategy works basically at three levels. In the first place it is concerned with separating the political energies of the three subject race groups in order to deprive urban blacks the enormous organizational and leadership potential vested in the Indian and Colored communities. These two communities have always been situated ambiguously along the local racial spectrum. Unlike blacks, apartheid has never formulated a definite scenario for their political future. While Indians and Coloreds have been discriminated against almost on par with the black minority, the notion has endured, even in some Afrikaner circles, that they constitute potential alliance partners for the white minority. In the case of the Coloreds this is rationalized through their cultural affiliation with Afrikanerdom: in the case of the Indians, on the basis of their relatively high level of "civilization". Under total strategy these notions have been given real operational content. Administrative exemptions under the Group Areas Act now allow Indians and Coloreds the dubious right to house black servants on their premises.<sup>51</sup> Indian and Colored socio-economic demands are normally given preference over those of blacks in the process by which government allocates resources. This selective treatment tends to create incentives for a tripartite racial coalition among both subject groups while widening the objective and perceived inequalities between themselves and the black majority. This is encouraged at the political and constitutional level where the Departments of Colored Relations and Indian Affairs have been merged into a single Department of Internal and Constitutional Affairs.<sup>52</sup> This will eventually take over the work of the present white Ministry of the Interior. Indians and Coloreds are now in the process of being integrated into some white

municipal institutions<sup>53</sup> while at the national level three-way inter-racial consultation on matters of common interest is now accepted generally as a matter of principle. The institutional expression of this is the President's Council which excludes black participation and is seen by many verligtes as a way-stage to eventual power-sharing between the minority race communities.<sup>54</sup>

Total strategy as a means of urban control is also attempting to drive a wedge between what one commentator has described as "an elite of urban black insiders" and their compatriot "outsiders" in the rural areas.<sup>55</sup> Township problems are, as noted, at the very epicenter of total strategy. This does not necessarily mean the homelands slipping into obscurity as issues in policy-making: they remain the doctrinal linchpins of apartheid from which no Nationalist government can depart. At the same time, as government becomes alert to the urgency of channelling energies into the townships, so the homelands have begun to experience relative difficulty in gaining access to the distributive instruments of apartheid. Territorial consolidation and economic development are part of the Botha government's program to lure the homelands into the proposed constellation of states. Yet frequent statements by Nationalist leaders recognizing the crux of South Africa's problems in the black urban areas produce anxiety when viewed from the penurious and depressed perspective of the homelands. Most homeland leaders today see themselves as locked into a competitive relationship with the urban areas on matters concerned with the distribution of government largesse. Many envision the spectre of a privileged minority of black urbanites surrounded by a sea of rural poverty. Government policy is not geared to discourage these perceptions. Under the so-called "new dispensation" for the urban areas the pass laws are enforced selectively, more leniently in the case of blacks

who have acquired urban rights, more harshly in the case of those who have not. It is more difficult than ever before for rural blacks to enter the urban area. In Soweto, only Section 10 "urban blacks" can qualify to vote for the Soweto Council or take advantage of the new ninety-nine year house leasing system.

At a third level, total strategy functions to control the black urban areas by exploiting social cleavages within them, partially along the familiar lines of ethnic division, more frequently in a fashion conforming with class distinctions. Progressive urbanization normally induces governments to recognize the political importance of the middle sectors of urban communities and to seek to satisfy their growing demands for political participation.<sup>56</sup> In South Africa, white liberals have long argued the merits of a so-called "stable black middle class" as a bastion against black popular revolution.<sup>57</sup> In Afrikanerdom itself, the growth of the bourgeoisie in areas such as Soweto has encouraged some verligte elements to contemplate the possibility of cross-racial coalition politics for the first time. In its moderated version this would involve a tripartite minority alliance between white, Colored and Indian extended gradually to bring in the more "civilized" members of the black township elite: in a more radical scenario a four-fold coalition (i.e. white, Coloured, Indian and the urban black bourgeoisie) would be established immediately. In either eventuality, the seventies have seen the growth of the idea that the township middle class is somehow crucial to the political future of both the black urban areas and the wider South African community. The rest is definite moves under total strategy towards cultivating the big elites in areas such as Soweto, cleaving them from their racial counterparts in the townships and meshing their interests with those of the dominant components of the present system.

Under this fully-fledged cooptive policy most of the limited benefits of the post-1976 reforms have flowed to the already more privileged segments of township society.<sup>58</sup> Only the more affluent Sowetons can take advantage of the ninety-nine year leasehold system with its hidden economic costs. The "international-status" facilities offered by the growing number of desegregated hotels and restaurants in Johannesburg are clearly designed for the small minority of local blacks with the resources to pay for these gratuitous pleasures. The expressed intention of government to tailor influx control to the availability of housing and employment will only benefit the relatively small number of township-dwellers with stable employment and housing. Similarly, were it to introduce a system of exemptions from the pass laws modelled on the 1923 Native Urban Areas Act, it would benefit only the skilled and professional members of the community. The pending decision by government to open parts of central Johannesburg to traders of all races and its decision to remove most of the remaining constraints on black business are basically irrelevant to the township majority barring its very small upper stratum.

#### IV TOTAL STRATEGY: A COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY RECIPE?

What are the prospects for total strategy as a means for politically incorporating and/or controlling the townships? At the outset it should be emphasized that total strategy is not directly concerned with liberalizing the South African system. It is concerned with rationalizing it even though this may involve occasional concessions which inadvertently spillover into liberalization. Inasmuch as total strategy displays concern for the black townships it has implications for relations between the minority race groups, for relations within the white community, between the military and

civil sectors, the public and private realm and for homeland policy. Yet in the years of the Botha government, not a single piece of discriminatory or security legislation of any major importance has been removed from the statute books.

Within this limited context, total strategy nevertheless implies change of a certain type. Rationalization involves change of some sort, and even though this need not necessarily mean change in the direction of a more open system when viewed from outside South Africa, it may generate considerable resistance when viewed internally. Many white South African liberals, for example, are reluctant to support the "changes" flowing from total strategy because they are seen to be both inadequate and to be moving the system in a more authoritarian direction. Many bureaucrats within government resent the element of rationalization inherent in total strategy because it affects their organizational empires and their standard operating procedures in dealing with urban blacks. Township dwellers themselves are suspicious of the proposed "new dispensation". To many in a period of racial polarization nothing short of the concrete, visible and rapid dismantling of apartheid is acceptable.

Total strategy, as already noted, involves reorganizing the present white elite coalition. This means shifts of power and status between its components in a way producing inevitable antagonisms on the part of elements experiencing a relative decline in social position. The centralization of power in the executive and the elevation of the military and non-partisan civilian specialists to unprecedented prominence in political decision-making has produced rumblings of discontent in some National Party quarters, particularly in the Transvaal where it is interpreted, quite correctly, as a move to downgrade the party caucus and provincial congresses.<sup>59</sup> Since



these are the repositories of established ideology the rise of strategic and technocratic criteria for policy-making is viewed with considerable alarm.<sup>60</sup> This view is shared by the Afrikaner working class many of whom have doubtlessly come to see the growing flirtation between the National Party and English capital as a threat to both their class and racial interests.

In Afrikanerdom there are a variety of different perceptions as to how the present survival crisis, of which the urban black issue is an integral element, should be met. The Right, represented by the Herstigte National Party and the Transvaal Nationalist leader, Dr. Andries Treurnicht, rejects the subtle distinctions drawn by the Botha government between "principle" and "policy" as pure casuistry.<sup>61</sup> The notion of dual citizenship for urban blacks, their representation other than through the traditional formula of the homelands, power-sharing with Indians and Coloreds and the desegregation of social facilities are regarded as deviant and dangerous tamperings with Afrikaner identity no matter how necessary they might be for a more effective system of control. As these views are projected into the highest realms of the National Party, total strategy comes up hard against powerful barriers based on time-honored assumptions and values. It is an indication of the rigid framework within which total strategy functions that some of the most important strides made by the Botha government have been in the areas of black education and housing i.e. on relatively less visible issues with limited potential to generate Afrikaner revolt.<sup>62</sup> On the political front the new South African constitution is very much a compromise between black and Afrikaner right-wing demands with the latter overwhelmingly predominant.<sup>63</sup> If total strategy is to be effective as a national device for dealing with the black townships or anything else, government will have to

break free of intra-party pressures to challenge the high priests of apartheid ideology more forcefully than it has in the recent past.<sup>64</sup>

The whole constellation notion at the center of current plans to channel township political energies in an attenuated "national" direction is also bedevilled at critical points. While the Botha government has moved towards seeking the acquiescence of other racial groups in designing its political formula for the future, it is not at all improbable that its overtures will founder on the heritage of centuries of accumulated racial hostility. The participation of urban blacks in the proposed constellation can only be made ideologically palatable to the National Party if the scheme is legitimized through the participation of reasonably viable "independent" homelands. Yet the system of inducements created with the homelands in mind is grossly inadequate as compensation for decades of under-development in the rural areas. It has been estimated that it will take a century and R3 billion even to fulfill the land of promises of 1936.<sup>65</sup> Any consolidation program involves a massive under-utilization of agricultural land and large scale population removals which will plunge the homelands even deeper into poverty.<sup>66</sup> This does not augur well for the homelands coming quiescently into a polite political arrangement drawn up by white technocrats, least of all in the case of those already independent. Homeland leaders have already displayed resentment at the casual transfer of territories envisioned under the various consolidation schemes. Kwazulu's Chief Buthelezi, for example, has made it clear that he will not participate in the constellation of states if Kwazulu's Ingwavuma area is allotted to Swaziland.<sup>67</sup> Since Buthelezi is also adept at exploiting the residual rural political interests and styles found in poor communities such as Soweto, he is also likely to resist government efforts to cleave urban and rural

rural blacks into hostile separate categories.<sup>68</sup>

It is also far from clear whether the Indian and Colored minorities can be brought into the elite coalition in a fashion depriving urban blacks of important potential political resources. The leaders of both groups are extremely sensitive to being labelled mere extensions of the white elite, and it is appreciated that commitments to a white alliance could have catastrophic consequences for both communities in the long-term future.<sup>69</sup> In both communities, as recurring disturbances over the last five years indicate, there is also accumulating anger at white minority rule. In an important gesture of subject-group solidarity their most prominent representatives have refused to serve on the President's Council in the absence of black participation.<sup>70</sup> This position could be moderated were the Council to show political muscle or be opened to black membership. Yet the fact remains that Indians and Coloreds are still part of the disadvantaged in local society to an extent which white political overtures and economic inducements have failed to allay. The major socio-economic recommendations of the Theron Commission, established to investigate the overall position of the Coloureds, remain to be implemented.<sup>71</sup> Inequalities between white, Indian and Colored remain enormous in every sphere, from education through per capita income to housing. In some ways the President's Council is politically regressive relative to the now redundant Indian and Colored Representative Councils both of which were elected bodies with specific if limited executive powers.<sup>72</sup> In these circumstances, even while Indian and Colored leaders experience difficulty in adjusting to more radical notions of black consciousness, they are unlikely to throw in their lot with the white minority as envisioned by total strategy. At best, they will hedge their bets for the foreseeable future, avoiding clear

commitments to either of the two major racial contestants.

The uncertain prospects for total strategy are compounded by the fact that cooption may not be a viable strategy for the dealing with the black urban poor in the South African context.<sup>73</sup> Cooptive forms of political control of the type planned for South Africa's urban blacks only last as long as coopters tolerate the power reallocations exacted as the price of compliance, or, alternatively, as long as the cooptees remain satisfied with the form and pace of these reallocations. It is all very well to attempt to cleave off the more advantaged elements in communities such as Soweto or to rub raw the competitive edges between the urban and rural deprived. Yet if Soweto is to be stabilized by a system of black middle class brokers mediating between the townships and the broad political system, real resources of power and patronage must reside in the township communities.<sup>74</sup> This requires a significant dismantling of racial barriers on the part of a society whose historic purpose has been to build divisions between the races. The black bourgeoisie of Soweto may not be as conservative nor as influential as the formulators of total strategy suppose.<sup>75</sup> Three decades of consistent apartheid has had the effect of meshing black interests and values across both class and geographic lines: racial affinity today cuts across divisions between township rich and poor, the urban and rural sector producing a uniformity of political orientations. These pose enormous problems for control worked through black cleavage. The power of the poor may also have less to do with the organizational and leadership resources provided by its upper strata than with its capacity to withdraw labor and promote turbulence.<sup>76</sup> Labor rather than the black middle class may be the critical element in Soweto's political future.

All of these factors complicate the delicate reward-compliance tradeoff at the center of workable cooptive policies. In singling out

the black middle class, total strategy may be rewarding the wrong social formation: In assuming it can be cleaved from township society, total strategy may be grossly underestimating the cement of racial solidarity. The rewards offered by total strategy are, to date, totally inadequate to induce middle class compliance or to break the bonds binding it to the township community. Few of the economic promises in the rhetoric of total strategy have materialized, partly because of ideological constraints, partly because national strategies to resolve urban problems always, in South Africa no less, require sacrifices incompatible with the optimal functioning of free enterprise economies. To upgrade Soweto rapidly requires cutbacks of capital accumulation and administrative budgets of an order which neither government nor the business sector is prepared to contemplate.<sup>77</sup> The proposed 99-year leasehold scheme has degenerated into a morass of administrative regulations so that only a minuscule number of wealthier Sowetons are likely to own their homes in the foreseeable future. Leasehold, needless to say, does not satisfy demands for freehold rights in the township areas. Black business remains restricted to these areas. Government, while conceding the importance of black capitalism, continues to assist white enterprise to cut into the township market.

The political inducements offered by total strategy to the township bourgeoisie are also insufficiently attractive to sustain a workable policy of cooption. Despite government pronouncements of its intention to elevate the Soweto Council to full municipal status, the actual process of doing so is painfully slow. With real administrative and executive power still vested in the West Rand Administration Board, and with it likely to remain there for the foreseeable future, a diminishing number of Sowetons of any stature are prepared to risk their

reputation and social status by associating with community council activity. This hostility towards government-sponsored political institutions extends upwards to include any proposals for urban black involvement in a confederal or consociation arrangement. Statutory bodies have notoriously lacked power and legitimacy in the urban black communities and township leaders have little reason to believe that the Soweto Council or the proposed confederal scheme will depart from historic tradition. The "new deal", locally and "nationally" is regarded generally as a device for sidetracking black political energies from its preferential objective of an unitary and majoritarian South Africa.

Urbanization, it is widely argued, promotes the "modernizing" forces in society, economy and polity.<sup>79</sup> Urbanization challenges prevailing values and beliefs to disseminate modern social ideas not only among individuals and groups moving into the urban setting, but also among policy-makers forced to respond to the problems raised by the urbanization process. In South Africa, as township issues have assumed an unprecedented centrality in government policy-making they have contributed to the process of cultural redefinition through which Afrikanerdom has moved with its own urbanization over the last sixty years. As Afrikaners have been forced to recognize the black urban areas as permanent, politically important and not to be wished away, so they have been forced to question some of the most important conventional credos governing their perceptions of politics and race relations. The price of a viable cooptive policy may nevertheless be too high for a white political culture devoid of any experience in adjusting its beliefs, least of all its interests, to black demands however moderate. Even in the new era of total strategy elite opinion, both Afrikaner and English, continue to see all but the most nebulous

black criticism as tantamount to radicalism and subversion. Cooption can only succeed in neutralizing black township militancy if there is some elementary tolerance and commitment to genuine bargaining and negotiation on the part of power-holders. Whatever its other features, the proposed consociation-confederal scheme to accommodate the townships requires the same qualities. Yet there is little in the history of South Africa in the last five years to indicate that this critical minimum of elite flexibility actually exists.

This reflects a much more fundamental problem. Under the best of circumstances cooption can only resolve the so-called "crisis of inclusion" accompanying urbanization to the extent that it succeeds in the normally difficult task of establishing popularly recognized criteria for new political participation.<sup>79</sup> In South Africa this problem is complicated by the fact that the potential cooptees - new elite members or reserve elites - are composed of individuals and groups historically ascribed pariah status. Total strategy is a national response to a black urban problem: yet the costs of responding effectively, measured culturally or politically, produce the most rigid constraints on action. It is precisely because of the cultural differences, racial myths and biological fantasies infecting South African politics that the Botha government is still stymied on the issue of whites sharing power with the Indian and Colored communities. For the same reasons, the best that total strategy can offer urban blacks in some distant future is a transparently inadequate role in a loose consultative organization devoid of any effective power to decide on national affairs. The issue behind virtually every instance of black protest, including the 1976 riots, namely black access to central decision-making machinery, is nowhere near being treated, least of all discussed in white political circles where it continues

to be regarded as the preserve of black revolutionaries and the white left-wing lunatic fringe.

This is not to ignore changes in white consciousness since 1976 particularly a greater awareness of the problems facing blacks in the urban centers. Yet this has not resulted in assertive government action either because the greatest alterations of attitude have taken place outside central policy-making circles, or, as a recent survey suggests, because an awareness of the magnitude of these problems has induced over-reactive anxiety blunting the search for concrete solutions.<sup>80</sup> At the same time, black consciousness in the townships has accelerated in the last five years to produce demands rapidly outstripping white conceptions of what is culturally or politically tolerable.

In the last analysis, total strategy may founder in its attempts to resolve the problems posed by the black townships simply because South Africa is too deeply divided at its structural foundation to support any remedial strategy, however total. Race coincides with class in an explosive political formula. The development of a client black middle class could in the short-term delay conflagration by filtering down political and economic gains to the black urban masses. In the long-term however, any national strategy to resolve the black urban problem must come to terms with the inequitable concentration of wealth and power in the white community. It is difficult to envision change at this level with government committed to free enterprise, business to maximum profit, and the entire elite to historically, culturally and ideologically sanctioned norms and institutions based on differences between the races. In effect, a national strategy to bring urban black South Africa into the political system would require a roll-back of apartheid of an order which total strategy shows no inclination



to contemplate. In the unlikely eventuality of such major change a total strategy would be unnecessary and serve no purpose.

FOOTNOTES.

<sup>1</sup> On total strategy as a counter-revolutionary device see Philip Frankel, "Race and Counter-Revolution: South Africa's 'Total Strategy'," Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, Vol. XVIII, No. 3, November 1980.

<sup>2</sup> On this issue see Francine Rabinovitz, "Urban Development and Political Development in Latin America," Paper, Faculty Seminar on Comparative Urban Studies, University of North Carolina, July-August 1967. This paper was subsequently published by the Comparative Public Administration Group, American Society for Public Administration, Bloomington, Indiana, 1967. Among the various studies on urban-national linkages, see Phillips Cutwright, "National Political Development: Measurement and Analysis," American Sociological Review 28 (1963); Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man. (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1963). The latter, pp 37-8 correlates urbanization with political democracy.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Philip Frankel, "Consensus, Consociation and Cooption in South African Politics," Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines 80, XX-4.

<sup>4</sup> This is one of the main conclusions reached by the study commission on apartheid established by leading liberals in the mid-seventies to analyze South Africa's political alternatives. See Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society, South Africa's Political Alternatives: Report of the SPROCAS Political Commission (Johannesburg:

Ravan Press, 1973).

<sup>5</sup> By way of example, see Progressive Federal Party, The PFP Policy - Consensus Government (Johannesburg: Progressive Federal Party, 1979).

<sup>6</sup> South African Institute of Race Relations, Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1980 (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1981), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> See Philip Frankel, "Dynamics of a Political Renaissance: The Soweto Students Representatives Council," Journal of African Studies. Vol. 7. No. 3. 1980.

<sup>8</sup> Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg) October 26, 1979.

<sup>9</sup> Post (Johannesburg), September 2, 1979; Sunday Times (Johannesburg), April 22, 1979; Sunday Times, August 5, 1979.

<sup>10</sup> The appointment of a political scientist to head the Department of National Security is indicative. The Star (Johannesburg), January 14, 1980. See also Sunday Times, October 14, 1979; The Star, May 2, 1980; Rand Daily Mail February 19, 1980.

<sup>11</sup> Rand Daily Mail, October 26, 1979.

<sup>12</sup> The Star, April 30, 1980.

<sup>13</sup> Two out of every five economically active whites are bureaucrats of some sort. Ten thousand laws and regulations affect the private sector alone. See The Star, November 2, 1978; Rand Daily Mail, May 2, 1979; Sunday Times, July 16, 1978; Sunday Times, April 22, 1979.

<sup>14</sup> The Star, October 1, 1979; The Star, April 12, 1980.

15 Sunday Times, August 5, 1979; Post, December 7, 1979

16 The Star, November 2, 1978.

17 The Star, May 8, 1979.

18 On recruitment problems facing the South African police, see Philip Frankel, "South Africa: The Politics of Police Control," Comparative Politics. Vol. 12. No. 4. July 1980.

19 Sunday Times, April 22, 1979.

20 Ibid.

21 The Star, January 14, 1980; Sunday Times, October 14, 1979; Post, September 2, 1979.

22 The Star, October 14, 1979; Rand Daily Mail, October 26, 1979.

23 Westminster parliamentary democracy is taken to mean a unitary state, a parliamentary executive, the sovereignty of parliament, a bicameral legislature and an electoral system based on a majority vote in single-member constituencies. On the basis of these criteria South Africa is clearly not of the type; it both excludes blacks from parliamentary representation while maintaining the provinces as integral tiers of government. See H.R. Hahlo and E. Kahn, South Africa: The Development of Its Laws and Constitution (London: Stevens and Sons, 1960); Leonard Thompson, The Unification of South Africa. (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).

24 The concept of a strong executive authority is reflected in the now redundant 1977 Nationalist Party plan for a new consociational-style constitution. For an analysis of this

plan, see Frankel, "Consensus, Consociation and Cooption..."  
ibid: W.B. Vosloo, "Consociational Democracy as a Means to Accomplish Peaceful Political Change in South Africa; An Evaluation of the Constitutional Change Proposed by the National Party in 1977," Politikon, Vol. 6. No. 1: National Party, New Political Dispensation for White, Colored and Indian (National Party, 1977); D. Worrall, "The South African Government's 1977 Constitutional Proposals," in J. Benyon (ed.), Constitutional Change in South Africa: Proceedings of a Conference on Constitutional Models and Constitutional Change in South Africa (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1978).

<sup>25</sup> The Star, September 20, 1979.

<sup>26</sup> The President's Council is headed by the Vice State President elected by the House of Assembly. The Council has a number of specialist sub-committees, on constitutional matters, planning, economics, community relations. These advise the President on any issue except draft legislation before parliament. See The Star, May 9, 1980; Survey of Race Relations, 1980, ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Sunday Times, May 4, 1980; The Star, May 14, 1980.

<sup>28</sup> Rand Daily Mail, January 25, 1980; The Star, May 30, 1980; Sunday Times, October 14, 1979.

<sup>29</sup> Survey of Race Relations, 1980, ibid. p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> The Star, March 10, 1980.

<sup>31</sup> The Star, August 8, 1979.

<sup>32</sup> Rand Daily Mail, October 26, 1979; Rand Daily Mail,

November 9, 1979.

<sup>33</sup> On the consociational theme in South African politics, see Footnote 24, ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Survey of Race Relations, 1980, ibid., p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> On the notion of a regional constellation and its attendant problems, see Deon Goldenhuys, The Constellation of Southern African States and the Southern African Development Coordinating Council: Towards a New Regional Stalemate. (Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs, 1981).

<sup>36</sup> Post, September 25, 1979; The Star, June 9, 1979. More land is likely to be allocated to the Transkei and Ciskei, (with East London a "joint venture port" shared between South Africa and the two homelands), Kwazulu will probably be consolidated into two parts divided by a Durban corridor, Bophutatswana made into a single territory abutting south and south-east Botswana. Lebowa, Venda and Gazankulu could conceivably be forged into a single unit with similar buffer functions along the Transvaal's international boundaries. See The Star, August 8, 1979; The Star, September 21, 1979.

<sup>37</sup> Rand Daily Mail, September 25, 1979.

<sup>38</sup> The Star, April 25, 1979.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Rand Daily Mail, June 10, 1980.

<sup>41</sup> On the fashion this factor has hindered township development through history, see Philip Frankel, "Municipal

Transformation in Soweto: Race, Politics and Maladministration in Black Johannesburg," African Studies Review. Vol. XXII. No. 2. September 1979.

<sup>42</sup> On the embourgeoisement of the Afrikaner and the growth of Afrikaner capital, see Heribert Adam and Herbert Giliomee, The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979).

<sup>43</sup> Rand Daily Mail, November 5, 1979; Rand Daily Mail November 23, 1979.

<sup>44</sup> Rand Daily Mail, November 23, 1979.

<sup>45</sup> The Star, April 12, 1980.

<sup>46</sup> Rand Daily Mail, November 23, 1979.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Daland, "Urban Policy and Political Development in Latin America," American Behavioral Scientist. Vol. 12. No. 5. 1969.

<sup>48</sup> The Star, June 9, 1978; Rand Daily Mail, April 21 1979.

<sup>49</sup> Post, September 25, 1979.

<sup>50</sup> On the two minorities, see, inter alia, Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society, South Africa's Minorities (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1971).

<sup>51</sup> Rand Daily Mail, September 12, 1979.

<sup>52</sup> Post, December 7, 1979.

<sup>53</sup> Rand Daily Mail, October 26, 1979; The Star, April 30, 1980.

<sup>54</sup> Rand Daily Mail, February 19, 1980.

55 Rand Daily Mail, July 5, 1979.

56 John J. Johnson, The Emergence of the Middle Sectors: Political Change in Latin America (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958); Luis Ratinoff, "The New Urban Groups," in Seymour Martin Lipset and I. Solari (eds.), Elites in Latin America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).

57 Rand Daily Mail, February 17, 1973; Rand Daily Mail April 22, 1977; Rand Daily Mail, May 7, 1977.

58 There are very few studies of patronage and coopt-ion in South African politics. See however, Heribert Adam, Modernizing Racial Domination (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971) p. 156.

59 A Survey of Race Relations, ibid, p. 12.

60 The Star, September 20, 1979; Rand Daily Mail January 25, 1980.

61 The Star, ibid.

62 Rand Daily Mail, January 25, 1980.

63 The Star, May 9, 1980; The Star, May 14, 1980.

64 Sunday Times, April 22, 1979.

65 The Star, September 20, 1979; Rand Daily Mail, January 23, 1979.

66 The Star, April 20, 1979.

67 Rand Daily Mail, September 24, 1979.

68 On the tenacity of rural styles and values in urban



politics see Andrew Frank, "The Politics of Urban Reform in Latin America," Studies in Comparative International Development 2, 1966; Irving Horowitz, "Modern Argentina: The Politics of Power," Political Quarterly, 30, October-December, 1959.

<sup>69</sup> Many Natal Indians, with their history of conflict with the local Zulus, take their political cues directly from Chief Buthelezi.

<sup>70</sup> The Star, July 19, 1979.

<sup>71</sup> On the Theron Commission see Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Matters Relating to the Colored Population Group (Pretoria, Government Printer, RP, 38, 1976).

<sup>72</sup> The Star, March 4, 1980; The Star, May 28, 1980.

<sup>73</sup> On cooption as a strategy of political control in poor communities, see Susan Eckstein, The Poverty of Revolution: The State and the Urban Poor in Mexico (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); David Collier, Squatter Settlement Formation: The Politics of Cooption Unpublished dissertation, University of Chicago 1971.

<sup>74</sup> On the whole question of power and patronage in poor urban communities, see Gary Hoskins, "Patterns of Power and Politics in a Venezuelan City: The Significance of San Cristobal's Development." Unpublished mimeograph, 1966.

<sup>75</sup> Leo Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie: Race, Class and Politics in South Africa. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965); Nimrod Mkele, "The Emergent African Middle Class," Optima, December 1960.

76 Francis Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, Poor People's Movements: How They Succeed, Why They Fail (New York, Pantheon, 1977).

77 On the relationship between urbanization, capital and administration, see Denis Lambert, "Urbanisation et Developpement Economique en Amerique Latine," Carvelle (University of Toulouse), 3, 1964.

78 The literature on this point is enormous. See, for example, Kingsley Davis and Hilda Golden, "Urbanization and the Development of Pre-Industrial Areas," Economic Development and Cultural Change, III, 1954; Leonard Reissman, The Urban Process (New York, Free Press, 1964); Alfred Stepan, "Political Development Theory: The Latin American Experience," Journal of International Affairs, II, 1966; Frank Bonilla, "The Urban Worker," in J.J. Johnson (ed.), Continuity and Change in Latin America (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964).

79 On the so-called "crisis of inclusion" brought about with the growth of participant orientations among new urban dwellers, see John Friedmann and Thomas Lackington, "Hyperurbanization and National Development in Chile: Some Hypotheses," Urban Affairs Quarterly (2) June 1967.

80 The Star, July 3, 1981.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION: SOWETO, URBAN THEORY AND THE FUTURE

Soweto is important both practically and analytically for the future of South Africa - be it an evolutionary future involving graduated and non-violent change, or a revolutionary one with its connotations of extreme conflict and abrupt transfers of social power. At the practical level Soweto, as we emphasized at the outset, lies in the center of South Africa's economic and political heartland. It has thereby enormous, if still disorganized and latent capacity to influence developments at the national level. Analytically the townships provide important indicators of some of the major trends and options in current South African politics, particularly those related to the major issue of incorporating the country's urban blacks into the national political system. The political culture of Soweto, with which we dealt in the opening sections, is crucial to any understanding of whether the subjective preconditions to revolution exist in the black townships. We have suggested that the question is far more complex than appears at the surface. Despite the enormous ability of racial discrimination to cut into black supports for the political system, many feelings on race and politics remain ambiguous. At the same time there are forces in township society and on the borders of the South African political system encouraging more militant forms of black consciousness which assist the translation of resentments towards the political order into action organized against it. The form of such action is however influenced deeply by political leadership in the township community. The projection of

political demands in incremental or radical terms requires organization, organization in its turn presumes capable leadership, and much thereby comes to depend on the type of leadership likely to emerge as predominant in South Africa's urban black communities. Whether this leadership is rooted in black nationalism or socialism, in carefully articulated patron-client systems linking compliant blacks with the dominant order, or in the exploitation of residual rural life-styles, values and interests in the townships by more traditionally minded yet prominent groups and individuals is absolutely crucial.

Soweto is also a crucible for testing the various strategies of political control contained in the armory of the white elite, and for assessing their viability in the immediate future. There are observers of contemporary South Africa who are confident that the country's so-called "stalled revolution" will take life and accelerate rapidly in the short-term future. Conflict between black and white, particularly in the urban areas, it is attested will persist and grow. Yet, whether this will blossom into a movement challenging the system at its foundations, in the short-term, is an entirely different question. It is important not to under-estimate the reward distributing mechanisms of apartheid and the capacity of the elite to purchase compliance through positive welfare on the one hand, and, in cases where this proves ineffective, through negative sanctions on the other. In the second part of this work we have analyzed the control capacities and problems attached to government following policies of either type. Consideration has also been given to the so-called "total strategy" in which welfare, sanctions and cooption come together in a carefully articulated package. Inasmuch as this total strategy is centered on township communities such as Soweto it brings to the fore the whole question of the survival prospects of the ruling white elite.

These issues are critical for any discussion of present and future South African order. Yet Soweto is also significant beyond South Africa in generating data and testing theories about urban politics, particularly the role of the urban poor in accumulating power and mustering political resources in what is, by any stretch of the imagination, an explicitly racial context. It has been suggested, for example, that the internal organization of poor neighborhoods affects residents' political attitudes and behaviour. Their orientations towards self-help, civic responsibility and community cooperation are all conditioned, it is posited, by the specific nature of the locality.<sup>1</sup> This seems to be borne out by the Soweto experience where, to some extent at least, the political weight mustered by the community is a reflection of its physical features. Many poor urban communities emerge as a result of direct action on the part of their inhabitants. Many are the result of squatter invasions and many develop into reasonably habitable and comfortable environments as a result of self-improvement efforts on the part of their residents, either acting unilaterally or in concert with less deprived social formations or governmental authorities. This experience facilitates politicization of the neighborhood and it assists the process of recruitment to leadership roles.<sup>2</sup> Yet Soweto is not a community of this type. Squatter land invasions are not absent from township history nor are there no neighborhood self-help associations of various types. Yet the structures of Soweto, its houses, schools and transport services, are basically the product of government beneficence however sparing it might have been in the experience of the community.

Soweto is also not self-developed: to the extent that it has developed at all, it is largely a community, the result of government action, or more pointedly, government inaction throughout its history.

From an organizational perspective Soweto presents a strange contrast: social disorganization among its inhabitants stands side by side with what is - at least in formal terms, an intensely regulated environment. Yet, if Soweto is a study in social disorganization with the resultant lack of community self-help orientations often found in poor urban settings, it is not simply because the "bantu" is lacking in will and initiative, as some apologists for apartheid suggest but rather because it has always been the policy of the white dominated state to inhibit black initiatives particularly in the "white" metropolitan areas. Soweto displays the worst features of urban pathology and government today experiences enormous difficulty in mobilizing its inhabitants to raise the community. This is the legacy of township history where government has refused to act a developmental role except to meet the requirements of public order. Nor has there ever been any incentive for Sowetons to embark upon a sustained course of community self-improvement. The townships were established along lines of government rather than popular choice, they were subsequently enmeshed in a tight system of regulation basically insensitive to community needs and dominated by the doctrine that urban black areas were not supposed to exist in "white" South Africa in the first place. The resulting psychologies on the part of the authorities and township-dwellers proved inimical to the socio-economic improvement of the community. By the same token, urban black political leadership today still experiences great difficulty in emerging in Soweto, and, then mobilizing on a community-wide basis. Because the notion of community is so fragile and the history of popular initiative so weak, it is only the leader who pitches his claims in the lowest denomination of race who accumulated credibility. Because community appeals have no meaning to a community which, has largely internalized doctrinal and legal

notions denying its very existence, race not community becomes the tool by which these leaders crystallize their role-functions.

The fragile sense of community in Soweto is further eroded by residential instability. Influx control theoretically seeks to regulate township population by recognizing certain urban blacks - so-called Section 10 blacks - as urban-dwellers, and by controlling the movement of the remainder of "temporary" urbanites according to regional and metropolitan labour requirements. Yet influx control no longer lives up to this ideal situation and in the light of the progressive growth of township population, it is questionable whether it ever did. Indeed were influx control to be effective Soweto might well be, paradoxically more stable residentially than under present circumstances. In present circumstances however there is constant movement in and out of the township environment which inhibits the dissemination of political information and the development of community-based participation norms.<sup>3</sup> This is not to deny the existence of a stable residential core composed mainly of the young and urban born. As the riots of 1976 indicated, it from this core that political activism emanates. Yet surrounding this core is high residential turnover which cuts into community mobilization and political organization.<sup>4</sup> Some permanent residents of the townships may possess the necessary community identification and communications networks to sustain effective political action, now or in the foreseeable future. At the same time, as long as Soweto is a mecca for "illegal" migration (i.e. illegal in terms of the pass laws), as long as this enormous number of individuals is forced to remain mobile within township society in order to escape police prosecution, and as long as many return to the rural areas, either on a short or long-term basis, the prospects for sustained community action are questionable.<sup>5</sup>

These problems of community identification and human movement inhibit interpersonal and inter-group communication in the townships and compound the difficulties involved in creating political organizations in an environment already overshadowed by an authoritarian political system. Yet it needs to be said in the interests of balance that there is also very much in the structure and life-style of Soweto which works to encourage collective political involvement and, to some immeasurable degree, counter-balance the various forces assisting demobilization.

In the first place, low income communities tend to be more bounded formations than their wealthier counterparts,<sup>6</sup> and Soweto is especially tightly bounded both socially and geographically. Racial convictions and legislation tend to make the township itself the locus of activity for social transactions and contacts with the resulting climate of confinement acting to blend individual and group interests in a fashion highly favorable to community integration and the formation of associative political identities.<sup>7</sup> The essential distinctiveness of Soweto as a community tends to heighten pressures for individuals to conform to community norms,<sup>8</sup> and to standardize political information flows in a manner stimulating organizational formation and the emergence of representative political leadership. In the second place, insecurity is endemic in Soweto, because of influx control, police terror or the lack of freehold tenure. In the circumstances, a common and persistent sense of threat binds the community to intensify the political qualities associated with boundedness.<sup>9</sup> Soweto is also densely populated and this is important in the light of the inverse relationship between physical space and human interaction identified by some theorists: the less space, the greater the flow of political information and the stronger the feeling



of community identity. Finally, and perhaps most fundamentally, Soweto is a racially exclusive community where people of the same ascriptive qualities have been thrust together irrespective of ethnic or class divisions. This racial element we would argue profoundly intensifies identity with community norms independent of individual characteristics and political proclivities to forge a peculiarly powerful sense of esprit d'corps throughout the townships.<sup>10</sup>

Whether these factors are in themselves adequate to offset the complex of forces undercutting the political weight potentially available to the townships, is the critical question. Yet this is an issue unanswerable on the basis of available data: it will remain clouded in ambiguity until urban black South Africa initiates a successful revolutionary challenge to the system, or, less dramatically, until analysts are capable of accumulating systematically processed information on patterns of community identification in the townships and orientations towards self-help on both a social and political basis. Yet it is already manifestly clear that even if the psychological climate of Soweto is appropriate to action designed to bring down apartheid - and this, we have emphasized, cannot be taken as a foregone conclusion - the will and desire to act must be fed with leadership and organization if repetition of the debacles of the recent past are to be avoided.

Leadership, among the urban poor, and among other social formations, is a, if not the central ingredient, in the recipe for accumulating political resources. Leadership may in turn derive from any number of sources.

In poor communities however, leadership normally conforms to types. Thus leaders may be charismatic individuals or political leadership may emerge in the heat of crisis situations threatening the

community. Political leadership among the urban poor may alternatively derive from the transplantation of rural leadership patterns in the urban environment, or it may be stimulated by agents beyond the boundaries of the community—trade unions, political parties or government authorities intent upon mobilizing support among the deprived of society.

All these forms of leadership are represented in the Soweto case: Kwazulu chief Gatsha Buthelezi represents an amalgam of the charismatic leader and the transplantation of rural leadership styles, Dr. Nthatho Motlana, the leader generated by the crisis situation, and David Thebehali and his Soweto Council, the created form of political leadership, in this case fostered by the South African government. Each of these leaders perform the roles generally attributed to leadership in poor communities. They are "at the junctures or synapses of relationships connecting the local system to the wider world."<sup>11</sup> This means that they act as transmission belts for the flow of collective norms between the community and its environment<sup>12</sup> that they influence the formation of political orientations, (hence the nature of popular demands and supports), and that they generate organizational momenta and generally fuel the processes of political mobilization. Nevertheless, in a fashion reflecting their different origins, they perform these functions in particular ways with important implications for the pattern of politics in the Soweto community. In the case of Chief Buthelezi, for example, the transplantative quality of his leadership tends to resonate most favorably on the consciousness of the less urbanized elements in township society, (especially those of Zulu extraction). All evidence points to his experiencing considerable difficulty in broadening the constituency in the face of hostility on the part of the growing number of more urbanized township

groupings. The cause of Dr. Motlana tends to labor under the same constraints in reverse. His appeal is to the more urbane and radical of township dwellers and he enjoys limited success in cultivating the still fertile seeds of ethnic politics. Thebehali's political influence is a direct reflection of the existence of pragmatic and instrumental groupings in the townships, and will rise and fall in direct proportion to the ability of his governmental mentors to inject their patron-client system with adequate and attractive political and economic rewards. In the last analysis, Soweto indicates that racial affiliation and poverty are not in themselves adequate to inhibit the emergence of very different forms of political expression and leadership in deprived communities.

This has two important implications. In the first place it means that poor communities seeking access to power can move along very different and often contrasting channels, the contours of which are set by the specific circumstances out of which leadership arises. In the second place, it points to the possibility of intense internal political competition even in communities ridden by dire poverty and extremes of common discrimination.

In Soweto it may not simply be the absence of organizational and leadership resources which hampers its urban poor as political actors, but, to the contrary, the proliferation of conflicting leadership styles arising from a complex environment in which shifting and uncrystallised norms - rural, metropolitan, and intricate mixtures of both - offer diverse leaders a diversity of advantages.

Most older studies of the urban poor tend to ignore this latter point: urban poor communities are portrayed as relatively homogenous and monolithic united in common socio-economic deprivation. Certainly, the urban poor may cohere around a generalized sense of

deprivation. Yet because actual or perceived poverty is never perfectly uniform, social gradations rooted in occupation and education often appear to support different sets of political attitudes, interests and types of participation not to say political leaders.<sup>14</sup> Soweto is a poor community and like all communities of this type, meaningful class consciousness is slow to emerge independent of racial identities which tend to subsume township class divisions for all practical purposes.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, the unequal impact of industrialization on township life has produced status and class differentials, (if not necessarily intense feelings of class consciousness). This has in turn led to the emergence of a small, ethnically diversified and politically influential bourgeoisie who today largely monopolize organizational and leadership skills, and in so doing hold the key to community politics. The existence and expansion of this group has led government to explore new mechanisms of control rooted in the manipulation of class distinctions rather than treat the township as purely an ethnically-divided entity. The so-called "total strategy" represents this shift in emphasis with its connotations that ethnic diversity is of decreasing significance as a means to prompt divisions in township society. In the developing world of which South Africa is a part, many low income communities are split along religious, tribal and racial lines which influence behaviors and associations in the urban setting - although they may do so differently than in the rural sector. Political socialization in these cases takes place on a highly fractured and segmented basis inimical to the crystallization of class perceptions. Soweto is however spared many of these agonies with their tendency to undercut community integration because industrialization in South Africa is relatively far advanced, because race generates intense emotions transcending ethnic identities

In virtually every sphere of local politics, and because, in the last instance many Sowetons are acutely sensitive to the fact that it is government policy to undercut black solidarity through the manipulation of ethnic tensions. This is not to suggest that ethnic divisions do not appear in Soweton politics in specific instances such as during the Soweto riots in the clashes between deethnicized students and more traditional migrant hostel-dwellers. Yet ethnic politics can be the kiss of death for aspiring politicians who become open to charges of supporting apartheid policy. It is for this very reason that Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha movement has gone to extraordinary lengths to project itself as an instrument of black rather than Zulu liberation. On the whole, if ethnic (and for that matter, class) identifications are compartmentalized in the sense of being activated in different situations confronting the urban poor,<sup>16</sup> then the range of these situations is in the case of Soweto, quite limited.

Generational cleavages conforming to patterns of urban birth and residence are also important in the township environment where ethnicity and class form a complex and shifting mosaic of identities. At the same time, while the authorities experienced some success in manipulating parent-student tensions during the 1976 riots, this exercise in stimulating community fragmentation was ultimately overwhelmed by what is undoubtedly the most significant cleavage for Soweton politics i.e. the racial cleavage between the black community and the white-dominated political system. This cleavage cuts across every other to forge a basis for political action. In addition, when race coincides with poverty, as it does in Soweto, there exists a lethally explosive political combination. Participation in politics is, to the average Soweton more than a matter of socio-economically upgrading the townships: politics is more fundamentally a matter of eradicating the racial

strata built into South African society whose existence befuddles any attempt on the part of urban blacks to be upwardly mobile. It is this inextricable intertwining of racial and economic discontents which basically underwrites the volatility of Soweton politics.<sup>17</sup>

The Soweto experience also adds to the issue of the "penetration" of poor urban communities by external actors - by migrants moving to cities and political parties intent upon mobilizing support - and the consequences of this process for political behavior on the part of the inhabitants of these deprived areas. As far as migrant influx is concerned there are basically two postures in the extant literature. The first of these, closely related as it is to the notion of the urban poor as an anomic, marginal, frustrated and sporadically violent political mass, extends these qualities to include both indigene and transient or new urban dwellers. In this view, the extreme economic hardship and culture shock experienced by the new urbanite simply adds to the stockpile of discontent with the migrants providing a new source of recruitment for violent political action. The second set of theses, which arise out of works contesting the radical poor thesis, (the "passive poor" thesis, as some analysts have termed it), argues that migrant demands are highly particularistic and that the new city dweller has little time or energy to invest in any form of community action. Certain structures - kinship in the urban areas, step-wise migration in the movement to them - mediate the psychologically harsh impact of the city and also constitute a source of material assistance. The migrant, it is argued in this vein, almost always experiences better living standards in the city which conservatize him or at least induce a sense of apathy in relation to community affairs.<sup>18</sup> It is, from this perspective, only after a considerable period of time, if at all, that the migrant develops the sense of community identification necessary for

political participation in the new urban environment.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the general absence of step-wise migration Soweto tends to confirm the latter set of propositions, for in the townships migrant labor acts as an essentially conservative force when involved in local politics, if it is involved at all. There are a variety of elements supporting this conservatism in the case of Johannesburg's black townships, some universal in character, others more peculiar are the influx control laws which carefully separate out the more compliant applicants for internal passports enabling their holders to work in the urban areas. The threat of revocation acts as a major disincentive to political action on the part of the migrant in the urban setting. The influx control laws also demand that "illegal" migrants to the townships maintain as low a profile as possible, and this once again effectively precludes participation. Urban movement to Soweto additionally conforms to the sub-Saharan pattern in being seasonal, cyclical or on a target basis. As in other countries in the region emigration of this type tends to hamper migrant motivation to assimilate into the urban network for political or other social purposes. There are, it should be added, deep points of conflict between the indigenes and more transient and newer migrants into Soweto. Under the influx control laws migrants are obliged to enter the urban areas without their wives and this tends to engender tensions as the migrants turn to local women for sex and companionship. In addition, because Soweto's migrants are relatively young and uneducated they compete vigorously with unskilled elements among the indigenes in the lower grades of the labor market.<sup>20</sup> To the extent that these conflicts take on the ethnic overtones to which migrants are more susceptible than any other township grouping, the points of difference are exacerbated.

Under these circumstances, ideal as they are for governmental

manipulation in the interests of political control, the infusion of migrants into the Soweto townships tend to downgrade the political weight they can project as a community.<sup>21</sup> The political influence wielded by the townships is also however affected by the fact that racial norms and legislation combine to isolate the black areas in a way precluding them from entering into alliances with major power-holders outside the local community. In many cases outside of South Africa, the political weight of the urban poor derives directly from their ability to strike political bargains and trade-off various values with political parties or labor groups which are in turn important sources of organization and leadership. Experience outside of South Africa suggests that intense political competition outside poor communities spills over to stimulate neighborhood associations and creates participation incentives within these areas.<sup>22</sup> In South Africa however, all of the white political parties, the font of organized political power, are barred by law from entering into any form of association across racial boundaries, while the most powerful of all, the Nationalists, are committed to a policy of disincorporating blacks from the political system. The urban poor are generally, but not always conservative on the question of concluding trans-class alliances with external non-governmental forces, yet in the race-sodden climate of South Africa, it is questionable whether any but fringe movements in the black and white communities would even contemplate entering into non-racial political coalitions irrespective of whether or not such legislation as the Prohibition of Political Interferences Act actually existed.<sup>24</sup> It is in fact part of the philosophy of the black consciousness movement to discourage contacts across racial lines as a means to build black political self-confidence. Whether the subsequent loss of access to white organizational skills



justifies this position in the case of communities such as Soweto is a matter open to question.

Many of the earlier works on the politics of urban poverty tend to understate the fact that one of the most important of extra-communal actors shaping the political behavior of poor communities is government itself, and the entire second part of the study has been devoted to analyzing the various strategies employable by the authorities in denying political resources to the urban poor in the interests of both political compliance and control. Theoretically there are a variety of alternatives open to government in meeting challenges to the social order posed by urban poverty, but in the South African case these are reducible to three basic categories of action, each with a different internal logic but applied simultaneously to constrain effective and autonomous township action.

Because of their socio-economic deprivation and cognitive and behavioral involvement of the urban poor in politics is, in the first place, influenced deeply by their particularistic needs geared to the imperatives of daily survival - and Soweto provides a testing ground for the widely prevalent belief that government can manage the diverse political pressures stimulated by urban poverty through positive reward systems in which specific (and sometimes even diffuse) supports are constructed or encouraged. There is, it should be emphasized, no directly proportionate relationship between the quantity and quality of public welfare made available to poor communities and the political support they subsequently offer to the system. Welfare and support may be mediated by a variety of factors and in Soweto the perceived fundamental illegitimacy of the racial system and widespread relative deprivation derived from the extensive interaction between Sowetons and affluent white Johannesburg compounds the problems facing government in

buying off the townships. Expectations among the urban poor tend to rise with governmental performance in the direction of their satisfaction,<sup>26</sup> and "total strategy" with its emphasis on a "new deal" for urban blacks tends to accelerate welfare demands faster than the capacity of government to inject its welfare rhetoric with positive content. Although the second generation thesis has not been demonstrated conclusively in the South African context, generational factors also intervene to color the welfare-support relationship. The general volatility, cynicism and distrust of government displayed by Soweto's youth, (and urban-born and older residents), poses an important constraint on government's attempts to purchase political moderation.<sup>27</sup>

It is however important to bear in mind that in Soweto (and more universally) there is also no direct and automatic relationship between deficiencies in the service grid of poor communities and the political radicalization of their inhabitants. Quite apart from the fact that a frustration bred of living under deprived conditions may not find a political channel and may be directed off into such channels as alcoholism, crime and other forms of social pathology, the ability of deprivation to generate resentments of a political type is always a function of culturally-conditioned notions of acceptable living standards. The enormous social disorganization of Soweto attests to the fact that many of its inhabitants find solace and adjustment in areas outside of politics, yet the townships also mirror the fact that many poor new urbanites in the underdeveloped world regard their living conditions in the cities as satisfactory relative to the previous rural experience.<sup>28</sup>

In Soweto today, social conditions may be appalling from a modern Westernized perspective, yet there are imperfectly socialized elements in the community, especially among the new and transient migrants, who find the townships quite congenial in relation to their standards

and expectations, who have relatively low expectations of governmental performance, and who subsequently see no burning necessity for remedial political action. It is partially for this reason that the total strategy feels quite comfortable in discriminating to the advantage of permanent urbanites in the black areas in the distribution of political and economic favors.

In the last analysis however, the real problem of bending welfare to politics in South Africa lies less in the issue of there being an adequate supply of distributable public welfare resources for the deprived than in the perhaps more fundamental fact that the available mechanics are inadequate to set the process in motion. In Soweto it has never been the net quantity of resources which have been a barrier to welfare-type policies of political control, but rather that the distribution of welfare has always been skewed by the political, ideological and racial climate within which all social interaction in South Africa takes place. Security of land tenure ranks very highly in the hierarchy of material values adhered to by the urban poor, yet the granting of freehold rights to the inhabitants of Soweto entails such ideological deviation and political risk from the point of view of the Nationalists that all it has been able to come up with in the face of white resistance to date is an attenuated leasehold system unsatisfactory to township-dwellers in both practice and principle. Employment opportunities and effective education for their offspring are also highly regarded by the inhabitants of poor communities,<sup>29</sup> yet in South Africa, treating urban black employment and departing from bantu education entails a basic dismantling of some of the key pillars of apartheid and a surrender of some of its major mechanisms of political control.

Developing welfare grids in poor communities is always problematic -

so much so that in much of the developing world governments acknowledge little responsibility for alleviating the problems of poor neighbourhoods.<sup>30</sup> Yet the development of South Africa's black townships is complicated by the additional fact that it requires a diversion of public energies, materials and power from a privileged racial elite resistant to the logic linking welfare to political control. This psychology has inhibited the development of Soweto into a viable community in the past, and today it continues to dog current efforts to upgrade the townships on the part of either the public or private sector. The net impression gained from the Soweto case is that welfare and politics can be bent equally to each other, and that welfare strategies for controlling the urban poor may not in the end be viable in circumstances where transfers of resources take place across racial boundaries dividing the socially deprived from the privileged in a highly ideologized and basically inflexible political climate.

It is for this very reason that the strategic repertoire of the South African authorities continues to lean heavily on sanctions which unlike welfare, are basically insensitive to Soweto's demands, and are less concerned with manipulating popular subjectivities than with bluntly depriving the townships of the resources of manpower and organization necessary to translate resentment into effective resistance. Sanctions-orientated policies can of course be highly effective in depressing political action by the urban poor and may assume a variety of forms ranged along a continuum of coercion. In the South African case, controlling concentrations such as Soweto involves direct police action as well as more subtle techniques in the sanctions mode somewhat lower down the coercive scale geared to controlling human movement. With regard to the latter it should be noted that Soweto is relatively unique in that nowhere in the world are policies controlling human

movement to the metropolises applied on such a highly-institutionalized, forceful, blatantly discriminatory and politically apparent basis. At the same time, an effectively-working system of this nature requires so dense and complicated a pattern of administrative, social and political machinery as to severely strain the capacities of the political system. The dismantling of such a system in its turn comes up hard against such an ingrained mixture of cultivated interests and ideological constraints as to be virtually impossible. Influx control policies, as South Africa indicates, tend to feed the resentments of their objects so powerfully that, in the ultimate instance, the whole system becomes ridden with contradictions. In South Africa today, influx control has led to a politically explosive situation in the townships, it has fed the negative feelings of their inhabitants perhaps more than any other instrument of apartheid, it is not particularly easy to sweep aside nor is it especially efficient in its basic purposes.

In Soweto the result is that implementing influx control requires growing doses of direct police action, and yet, in the very relations between the police and the black community one finds echoes of the same problems and contradictions explicit in government efforts to control the townships through the pass system. Brute coercion of the type involved in police control can, it should be emphasized, be highly effective in disorganizing political action on the part of the urban poor or any other social grouping. In Soweto, police power raises the risks and costs of political involvement, creates a demobilizing climate of political fear, and in general projects the image of a powerful government in a fashion stifling political initiative. Police power also creams off leadership, and since the prestige of leadership in low-income communities is a function of the extent to which it can

produce rewards rather than invite repression,<sup>3</sup> the township leadership which is not arrested experiences difficulty advancing its credibility. At the same time, effective police sanctions must be systematic, unrelenting and severe if they are to engender non-participatory norms on a community-wide basis, and it is not at all apparent that this ultimate objective of sanctions-type actions can be produced in South Africa's particular climate. Part of the reason is to be found in the high international profile enjoyed by South Africa as a ruthlessly authoritarian state: this has already persuaded the formulators of the total strategy to dilute the more direct, visible and blunt forms of coercion embodied in government policy. Part of the reason is also to be found in the manpower problems experienced by the police (although some compensation derives from the use of the military in the domestic control realm and in the application of sophisticated technologies in control roles). It is race however which, more than anything, cuts into police manpower, encourages police brutality and, ultimately, crystallizes association between color and the workings of the political system in the minds of the average township inhabitant. It is important not to understate the politically demobilizing sense of hopelessness engendered in the political culture of Soweto in the face of overwhelming police power in the short-run. Yet the Achilles heel of all repressive programs of political control in the long-term is that they create fear of power where it is acceptance of legitimate constituted authority which is the basic ingredient of political stability. For this reason, and because the visible polarities of race have an ability to kindle political energy denied other forms of social interaction, influx control and police action are bound to founder eventually in their objective of pacifying the townships.

Neutralization-type policies working to create illusions of political and economic progress while locking the leadership and organizational resources of the urban poor into a patron-client framework are an alternative to both welfare and sanctions-type policies of control, and are particularly appropriate to climates where political life is highly symbolized or ideologized and where government has at its disposal a variety of symbolic rewards which it can bestow on its low income urban population.<sup>32</sup> There are however certain specific features of neutralization-type policies as applied as a vehicle for controlling the black urban poor in the South African context. In the first place, neutralization under the rubric of the total strategy has made its appearance in South Africa because of the very problems confronting government in managing concentrations such as Soweto through the medium of welfare and sanctions: apart from considerations of racial ideology, South Africa may not have adequate resources to embark upon a full-scale welfare course designed to produce quick political returns in the black city areas, nor, apart from resources, may its white elite be prepared to absorb the political costs of a sustained course of sanctions short of the eventuality of a fully-fledged and imminent black revolutionary threat. In the second place, while neutralization strategies normally involve both the manipulation of symbols and concrete action to produce patterns of dependency binding poor communities to the beneficence of government, in South Africa the emphasis is on the material rather than the psychological because the reserves of ideological and cultural compatibility between the elite and the deprived are so limited. Today it is virtually impossible to placate Sowetons with symbolic reassurances. This is hardly surprising in the light of a history where government has recurrently reneged on its social and political promises to blacks and

and where it still shows no substantial concrete desire to reverse South Africa's discriminatory situation.

Where South Africa does link up with the extant neutralization literature is that elite domination involves the manipulation of cleavages, between ethnic groups in Soweto, between urban and rural blacks and, perhaps most importantly for the future, between class elements in the townships. At the same time Soweto also indicates some of the severe constraints and contingencies with which neutralization policies have to contend in situations of deep and traditional elite dominance and polarization between races. In the last instance effective neutralization requires an elementary level of consensus and interaction between established and potential elites at both the levels of symbol and substance. Yet in South Africa, as we have noted there is no common or binding set of values between government and the objects of the neutralization exercise, class and race coincide to produce deep divisions between disadvantaged blacks in urban areas such as Soweto and privileged whites in positions of authority, and there is so deep a heritage of distrust between the two entities that it is difficult for urban blacks to conceive of any political and economic rewards distributed by government as anything but part of careful cooptive-type moves to perpetuate white domination. In these harsh circumstances, government attempts to promote a group along the lines of an eth-class (i.e. a group whose members share a sense of historic identification with their co-ethnics but who distance themselves from them on a socio-economic basis<sup>33</sup>), are not likely to resonate favorably on the consciousness of all but the most opportunistic members of the township bourgeoisie. In the best of circumstances the line between cooption and collaboration is a thin one and incorporation into ruling institutions is always a double-edged



sword for those coopted. In South Africa where inter-racial dialogue is in its last death-throes, the choices for blacks are ultimately more simple than usual.

Cooptive type policies tend to be ineffective in direct proportion to the existence in the political climate of overwhelmingly powerfully vested interests and racial stereotypings of cooptable groupings. In these circumstances there are critical constraints and convenient rationalizations against altering elite priorities and this seems borne out in South Africa where the white elite is not only sensitive to the fact that cooption can feed demands in a cumulative manner, but is also (from all available evidence) reluctant to treat the preconditional demands making a viable cooption at all possible. Today, virtually no Soweton leader can publicly justify any form of dialogue with the white authorities unless he is able to indicate that it will lead to the removal of influx control, all forms of discrimination and a redistribution of opportunity and wealth in a unitary majoritarian South Africa. Yet these minimal and non-negotiable requirements for dialogue on the part of urban blacks represent an unconditional surrender for members of the white elite - whether or not they are Nationalist or Afrikaner, supporters of apartheid or any of the various alternative formulae put forward by whites with their common denominator of maintaining a racial hold on the real reins of power. In South Africa there is every reason to believe that white politics is simply too inflexible to absorb the pariah races into any position of significant political influence. In these circumstances the ship cooption will flounder on the shoals of political culture - a white political culture rooted in the belief that it is its inalienable right to demand nothing less.

Ultimately, the divide between Soweto and the political system, between the community of black urban poor and the bastions of white

domination is too deep, too colored with racial mythologies, and too demanding in its claims to reallocations of social power, for any of the strategies of control presently articulated by the authorities to be effective over the long-term. This is not to deny them an extended capacity to delay black South Africa in realizing its goal of political justice for years to come, to manipulate its leaders and repress their followers to the detriment of their liberation. There is still an enormous disparity in the political resources between the white minority and its black challengers. At the same time politics is not a rational activity in which careful calculations precede action, and history is replete with examples where raw masses have suicidally hurled themselves in sheer desperation against seemingly all-powerful political establishments. In some cases, appearances have belied the truth and systems of privilege have suddenly and unexpectedly given way in the face of overwhelming pressure by the deprived. In others, elites have retaliated to drive the forces of change into positions where political recovery has involved the work of generations. In a third set of historic experiences - and these may well be most appropriate to defining the future of South Africa where both the forces of popular resistance and counter-revolution are relatively strong - established political systems have been slowly brutally and painfully eaten away, to ultimately and undramatically collapse - almost overnight in one silent puff of political finality. The urban black communities of South Africa are integral to this process. It is unrealistic to regard Soweto as the harbinger of bloody revolution in the immediate future. Nevertheless, Soweto is the crucible for the accumulating tensions which will inevitably erode the apartheid system. It is in this important - if obtuse - nurturing role that the historic significance of Soweto is to be found.

FOOTNOTES.

<sup>1</sup> See Joan Nelson; Access to Power: Politics and the Urban Poor in Developing Nations (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 304.

<sup>2</sup> William Mangin, "Latin American Squatter Settlements: A Problem and a Solution," Latin American Review, 2 (3) 1967.

<sup>3</sup> C.G. Bell, "A New Suburban Politics," Social Forces No. 47, 1969; D.R. Hensler, The Impact of Suburban Residence on Political Attitudes: A Contextual Analysis. Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1973.

<sup>4</sup> R. D. MacKenzie, "The Neighborhood," in R.K. Yin (ed.), The City in the Seventies (Itaska: Illinois Press, 1972); B. R. Roberts, Organizing Strangers: Poor Families in Guatemala City (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973); H.V. Savitch, "Powerlessness in an Urban Ghetto," Polity, 5 (1) 1972.

<sup>5</sup> The size of the urban community is also important for political mobilization. See Nelson, ibid, p. 256; A. Leeds, "Political, Economic and Social Effects of Producer and Consumer Orientations Toward Housing in Brazil and Peru: A Systems Analysis," in Francine Rabinovitz and Felicity Trueblood (eds,) Latin American Urban Research, Vol III (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1973).

<sup>6</sup> K.R. Cox, "The Spatial Structuring of Information Flow and Partisan Attitudes," in M. Doggan and S. Rokkan (eds.), Quantitative Ecological Analysis in the Social Sciences

(Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1969); D.R. Segal and S.H. Wildstrom, "Community Affects on Political Attitudes: Partisanship and Efficacy," Sociological Quarterly No. 11, 1970; M. Fried, The World of the Working Class (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1973).

<sup>7</sup> In Port Harcourt, Nigeria, for example, the absence of ethnically defined and segregated residential areas was found to limit the development of meaningful political identities among the local population. See Howard Wolpe, "Port Harcourt: Ibo Politics in Microcosm," Journal of Modern African Studies, 7 (3) 1969. On the general question of community integration and the development of participatory norms see A.L. Schorr, "Housing and its Effects," in R. Gutman and D. Popenoe (eds.), Neighborhood, City and Metro-polis (New York: Random House, 1970); W. Michelson, Man and His Urban Environment: A Sociological Approach (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1970); P. Mann, "The Neighborhood," in Gutman and Popenoe, ibid; J. Roberts and T. Gregor, "Privacy: A Cultural View," in J.R. Pennock and J.W. Chapman (eds.), Privacy (New York: Atherton, 1971); L. Rogler, "Slum Neighborhoods in Latin America," Journal of Inter-American Studies No. 9, 1967; M.H. Ross, "Community Formation in an Urban Squatter Settlement," Comparative Political Studies, 6(3) 1973; T. Lee, "Urban Neighborhood as a Socio-Spatial Schema," Human Relations, No. 21, 1968.

<sup>8</sup> See also R.D. Putnam, "Political Attitudes and the Local Community," American Political Science Review, 60 (3)

1966.

<sup>9</sup> On the relationship between perceived community threat and community integration see A.H. Banton, Communities in Disaster (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970).

<sup>10</sup> Cornelius makes the point that in poor communities individuals are on the whole more likely to conform to neighborhood norms and behavior patterns than inhabitants of higher income areas - independent of their individual personalities and political orientations. See Wayne Cornelius, Politics and the Migrant Poor in Mexico City Stanford: Stanford University Press, Chapter 5. See also Henry Dietz, Becoming a Poblador, Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1975.

<sup>11</sup> See E.R. Wolf, "Aspects of Group Relations in a Complex Society: Mexico," in D.B. Heath and R.N. Adams (eds.), Contemporary Cultures and Societies of Latin America (New York: Random House, 1965).

<sup>12</sup> F.W. Frey and L.L. Roos, Social Structure and Community Development in Rural Turkey: Village and Elite Leadership Relations (Cambridge: MIT Center for International Studies, Rural Research Project, No. 10); P. Jacob et al, Values and the Active Community (New York: Free Press, 1972).

<sup>13</sup> The notion of different channels to power for the urban poor is central to Nelson, ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Talton Ray, The Politics of the Barrios of Venezuela (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969)

pp 52/3 and 57/8: Andrew H. Whiteford, Two Cities of Latin America (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1964): p. 137: D. Butterworth, "Squatters or Suburbanites: The Growth of Shantytowns in Oaxaca, Mexico," in R. Scott (ed.), Latin American Modernization Problems (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973): A.M. MacEwan, "Stability and Change in a Shantytown: A Summary of Some Research Findings," Sociology 6(1) 1972: F. Vanderscheuren, "Political Significance of Neighborhood Communities in the Settlements of Santiago," in D.L. Johnson (ed.), The Chilean Road to Socialism (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1973).

<sup>15</sup> On the various constraints inhibiting the development of class consciousness among the urban poor see Nelson, ibid, Chapter 4.

<sup>16</sup> Nelson, ibid, p. 221.

<sup>17</sup> On ethnicity, race and class as generators of political action in poor African urban communities see, inter alia, A. W. Southall, "Race and Class in an African Town," Sociological Journal, No. 1. 1963: M. Banton, "Tribal Headmen in Freetown," Journal of African Administration, No. 6. 1954: Abner Cohen, Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969): S. Comhaire-Sylvain, "Associations on the Basis of Origin, Lagos, Nigeria," American Catholic Sociological Review, No. 11. 1950: A.L. Epstein, Politics in an Urban African Community (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958): M. Fraenkel, Tribe and

Class in Monrovia (London: Oxford University Press, 1964); P. Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen: Conservatism and the Process of Urbanization in a South African City (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1961).

<sup>18</sup> For the debate on these issues, see, inter alia, Joan Nelson, Migrants, Urban Poverty and Instability in Developing Nations (Cambridge, Harvard University, Center for International Affairs, Occasional Paper, No. 22, 1969); Wayne Cornelius, "Urbanization as an Agent in Latin American Instability: The Case of Mexico," American Political Science Review, 63(3) September 1969; Wayne Cornelius, "The Political Sociology of Cityward Migration in Latin America: Toward Empirical Theory," in Francine Rabinovitz and Felicity Trueblood (eds.), Latin American Urban Research, Vol. I (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1971); Alejandro Portes, "Leftist Radicalism in Chile," Comparative Politics, 2 (2) January 1970; Alejandro Portes, "Political Primitivism, Differential Socialization and Lower Class Leftist Radicalism," American Sociological Review, 36 (5) October 1971.

<sup>19</sup> This point is clearly linked to the so-called "second generation" thesis. See B.A. Pauw, The Second Generation (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1963); J. Rouch, "Second Generation Migrants in Ghana and the Ivory Coast," in A. Southall (ed.), Social Change in Modern Africa (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

<sup>20</sup> For a similar pattern of competition in a different geographic context see D.L. Maruska, Government Policy and

Neighborhood Organizations in the Squatter Settlements of Lima. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1972.

<sup>21</sup> On the more general issue of migrant adjustment to city life and its implications for behavior, see, E. Brody (ed.), Behavior in New Environments: Adaption of Migrant Populations (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1970); Nelson, "Migrants, Urban Poverty....." ibid; R. Morse, "Trends and Issues in Latin American Urban Research, 1965-70" Latin American Research Review, 6 (1/2) 1971; J. Abu-Lughod, "Migrant Adjustment to City Life: The Egyptian Case," American Journal of Sociology, No. 67, 1961; J. Gulick, "Newcomer Enculturation in the City: Attitudes and Participation," in F. Stuart Chapin and S. Weiss (eds.), Urban Growth Dynamics (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1962); A. Rose and L. Warshay, "The Adjustment of Migrants to Cities," Social Forces, No. 36, 1957; S.O. Imoagene, "Problems and Mechanisms of Immigrant Adjustment: Some Socio-Psychological Aspects of Urbanization," South African Journal of Social and Economic Studies, 3 (1) 1973.

<sup>22</sup> Nelson, Access to Power, ibid, p. 270; Anthony and Elizabeth Leeds, "Accounting for Behavioral Differences: Three Political Systems and the Responses of Squatters in Brazil, Peru and Chile," in John Walston and Louis Masotti (eds.), The City in Comparative Perspective (Beverly Hills, Sage, 1976) p. 226.

<sup>23</sup> On the dynamics of alliance-building between the urban poor and "external" groupings, see, inter alia,



A. Ugalde, Power and Conflict in a Mexican Community (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1970):  
 J.L. Reyna, An Empirical Analysis of Political Mobilization: The Case of Mexico (Cornell University: Latin American Studies Program, No. 26, 1972): D. Mabry, Mexico's Accion Nacional: A Catholic Alternative to Revolution (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1973).

<sup>24</sup> The ability of external actors to mobilize poor urban communities is normally dependent on the former developing populist identities and orientations. See, for example, T. di Tella, "Populism and Reform in Latin America," in C. Veliz (ed.), Obstacles to Change in Latin America (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

<sup>25</sup> The point has been made that welfare experiences difficulty in building supports where government is seen by the poor as responsive only under pressure, or where welfare policies are accompanied by coercive government action. This would seem to be of considerable importance in the Soweto case. See, for example, K.E. Lindenburg, The Effect of Negative Sanctions on Politicization Among Lower Class Sectors in Santiago, Chile and Lima, Peru. Doctoral dissertation, University of Oregon, 1970.

<sup>26</sup> This point is strongly emphasized in Cornelius, "Politics and the Migrant Poor....." ibid.

<sup>27</sup> For additional readings on the second generation thesis, see Ray, ibid., pp. 174-76; Daniel Goldrich et al, "The Political Integration of Lower Class Urban Settlements

in Chile and Peru," Studies in Comparative International Development, 3 (1) 1967; Samuel Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968) pp 281-83:

<sup>28</sup> Nelson, "Migrants, Urban Poverty....." ibid: M. Fried and P. Gleicher, "Some Sources of Residential Satisfaction in Urban Slums," Journal of American Institute of Planners, 27 (4) 1961; J.R. Seeley, "The Slum: Its Nature, Uses and Users," Journal of American Institute of Planners, 27 (4) 1961; A. Pearse, "Some Characteristics of Urbanization in the City of Rio de Janeiro," in P. Hauser (ed.), Urbanization in Latin America (Paris, UNESCO, 1961); F. Bonilla, "Rio's Favelas The Rural Slum Within the City," American University Field Staff Reports, East Coast, South American Series, 8 (3) 1961.

<sup>29</sup> I.L. Horowitz, "Electoral Politics, Urbanization and Social Development in Latin America," in G.H. Beyer (ed.), The Urban Explosion in Latin America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

<sup>30</sup> Nelson, "Access to Power...." ibid: p. 269: On the various problems confronting government in building services in developing urban areas, see B.A. Williams and A.H. Walsh, Urban Government for Metropolitan Lagos (New York: Praeger, 1972); R.H. Harrell, "Governmental Capacity in Developing Nations: A Survey of Urbanization in Tunisia," Maghreb Digest, 4 (9/10) 1966.

<sup>31</sup> See M. Lipsky, Protest in City Politics (Chicago:

Rand McNally, 1970): M. Lipsky and H. Levi, "Community Organization as a Political Resource," in H. Hahn (ed) People and Politics in Urban Society (Beverly Hills: Sage, Urban Affairs Annual Reviews, No. 6.).

<sup>32</sup> On this point see C. Kaufman, "Urbanization, Material Satisfaction and Mass Political Involvement: The Poor in Mexico City," Comparative Political Studies 4 (3) 1971.

<sup>33</sup> On "ethclass" as a concept, see Milton Gordon, Assimilation in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). p. 51 et seq; Marc Ross, "Class and Ethnic Bases of Political Mobilization in African Cities," Paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C. 1972.

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