

A history of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), 1956-1970

by

Clare Elizabeth Anne McKay

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Supervisor: Professor F.A. Mouton

Co-supervisor: Professor T. Dunbar Moodie

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Student number: 33087970

I declare that 'A history of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), 1956-1970' is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

DATE

ABSTRACT

Clare McKay

'A history of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), 1956-1970',
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The aim of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) was to represent the interests of all South African students nationally and internationally. The challenge then to the liberal NUSAS leadership was how to meet the demands of black students for a politically relevant policy while simultaneously retaining the loyalty of its white middle class and often conservative membership. In 1957, the black University College of Fort Hare returned to NUSAS to participate in the national union's campaign against the imposition of apartheid on the universities. Consequently, NUSAS adopted the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the foundation of its policy. Sharpeville and the increasing number of black students associated with NUSAS contributed to the further politicisation and leftward movement of the national union.

The emergence of two new exclusively African student organisations together with the decision of a student seminar in Dar es Salaam that NUSAS be barred from all international student forums as its demographics precluded it from representing the aspirations of the black majority was the pretext for a far-reaching interrogation of NUSAS's structure and functioning. Henceforward NUSAS would play a 'radical role' in society. This played into the hands of the government and its proxies, the new conservative students associations which sought to slice away NUSAS's moderate to conservative white membership. The arrest of current and former NUSAS officers implicated in sabotage provided more grist to the right wing mill. In an attempt to manage this most serious crisis, as well as to continue functioning in the increasingly authoritarian and almost wholly segregated milieu of the mid-1960s, NUSAS abandoned its 'radical role' and increasingly focussed on university and educational matters.

Nonetheless, the state intensified its campaign to weaken NUSAS. By means of legislation, the utilisation of conservative student structures and the intimidation of university authorities, the government attempted to ensure that segregation was applied at all NUSAS-affiliated universities. It was the application of segregation by cowed university authorities that precipitated the New Left-inspired student protests at NUSAS-affiliated campuses in the late 1960s as well as the establishment of the separate black South African Students Organisation, the latter leading to the exodus of all black students from NUSAS.

Keywords/terms

Students; South Africa; National Union of South African Students (NUSAS); universities; ethnic colleges; academic freedom; university apartheid; apartheid; student organisations; student activism

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	All African Convention
AAM	Anti-Apartheid Movement
AMSTF	African Medical Students Trust Fund
ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
ANS	<i>Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond</i> (Afrikaans National Student Bond)
AP	Afrikaner Party
APDUSA	African Peoples' Democratic Union of South Africa
ARL	Anti-Republican League
ARM	African Resistance Movement
ASA	African Students Association
ASB	<i>Afrikaanse Studentebond</i> (Afrikaans Student Bond)
ASF	Anglican Students Federation
ASK	<i>Afrikaanse Studenteklub/kring</i> (Afrikaans Student Club/Circle)
ASUSA	African Students Union of South Africa
ATKV	<i>Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuurvereniging</i> (Afrikaans Language and Cultural Organisation)
BC	Black Consciousness
BNC	Bantu Normal College
CAO	Committee of African Organisations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIE	<i>Confederation des Internationale Etudiants</i> (International Confederation of Students)

CNE	Christian National Education
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
CPSU	Cape Peninsula Students Union
COD	Congress of Democrats
COSEC	Co-ordinating Secretariat
CSA	Conservative Students Association
DA	Democratic Alliance
DSU	Durban Students Union
EPCSA	Eastern Province Conservative Students Association
FAK	<i>Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge</i> (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organisations)
FEDSEC	Federal Secretariat
Fedsem	Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa
FOPS	Federation of Progressive Students
FRAC	Franchise Action Committee
FRELIMO	<i>Frente de Libertacao de Mocambique</i> (Mozambique Liberation Front)
GNP	<i>Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party</i> (Purified National Party)
GUC	Grey University College
HNP	<i>Herenigde Nasionale Party</i> (Re-united National Party)
HUC	Huguenot University College
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers Union
IDAMF	Inter-denominational African Ministers Federation
ISC	International Students Conference
ISU	Independent Students Union

IUS	International Union of Students
JCE	Johannesburg College of Education
JIITT	Johannesburg Institute of Indian Teacher Training
LP	Liberal Party
MK	<i>Umkhonto We Sizwe</i> (Spear of the Nation)
MP	Member of Parliament
MSC	Medical Students Council
NAD	Native Affairs Department
NCFS	National Catholic Federation of Students
NCL	National Committee for Liberation
NEUM	Non-European Unity Movement
NIC	Natal Indian Congress
NP	National Party
NSA	National Students Association (United States)
NU	National Union
NUBS	National Union of Basutoland Students
NUC	Natal University College
NUS	National Union of Students (Great Britain)
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OB	<i>Ossewabrandwag</i> (Oxwagon sentinel)
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PP	Progressive Party
PSASU	Progressive South African Students Union

PNSO	Progressive National Students Organisation
PUCCHE	Potchefstroom University College for Christian Higher Education
RAU	Rand Afrikaans University
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SABRA	South African Bureau of Racial Affairs
SACHED	South African Committee for Higher Education
SACOD	South African Congress of Democrats
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACSA	South African Conservative Students Association
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAIC	South African Indian Congress
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SANC	South African Native College (Fort Hare)
SANNC	South African Native National Congress
SANROC	South African Non-racial Olympic Committee
SAP	South African Party
SASA	South African Students Association
SASO	South African Students Organisation
SAUDS	South African Union of Democratic Students
SAUJZS	South African Union of Jewish and Zionist Students
SCA	Students Christian Association
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SJA	Students Jewish Association

SLA	Students Liberal Association
SLL	Students Labour League
SNVCC	Students Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee
SOYA	Society of Young Africa
SRC	Students Representative Council
TCEA	Transvaal College of Education for Asiatics
TIYC	Transvaal Indian Youth Congress
TOKSU	<i>Transvaal Onderwyskollege Studente Unie</i> (Transvaal Teachers' Training College Students Union)
TUC	Transvaal University College
UCM	University Christian Movement
UCOFS	University College of the Orange Free State
UCON	University College of the North
UCT	University of Cape Town
UCWC	University College of the Western Cape
UDF	United Democratic Front (1950s and 1980s)
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UDW	University of Durban-Westville
UFP	Union Federal Party
UG	Union Government
UGEMA	<i>Union Generale des Etudiants Musulman Algeriens</i> (National Union of Algerian Students)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations

UND	University of Natal (Durban)
UNNE	University of Natal (Non-European)
UNP	University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg)
UOFS	University of the Orange Free State
UP	United Party
USA	United States of America
USF	United Student Front
UWC	University of the Western Cape
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WFDY	World Federation of Democratic Youth
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand
WUS	World University Service

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

'I also salute the Black Sash and the National Union of South African Students. We note with pride that you have acted as the conscience of white South Africans. Even during the darkest days in the history of our struggle you held the flag of liberty high.' Nelson Mandela, Cape Town, 11 February 1990.¹

During his first public speech delivered from the balcony of the Cape Town City Hall on 11 February 1990 after his release from twenty seven years in prison, Nelson Mandela greeted, thanked, saluted and paid tribute to a host of organisations and individuals for their ceaseless struggle against apartheid and racial domination and their commitment to the establishment of a non-racial democracy in a unitary South Africa. Included amongst these were two liberal and almost exclusively white structures, the Black Sash and the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS),² the latter the object of this study. This dissertation will investigate some of the possible reasons why NUSAS was singled out for such honour.

By 1990 NUSAS had aligned itself with the liberation movement. In so doing it threatened the privileged racial and class position of the white middle class students at the English-medium universities where it operated. At its foundation in 1924, NUSAS aimed to represent students nationally and internationally and defend and champion their interests. The challenge then to the liberal NUSAS leadership in the period 1956 to 1970 (my earlier Master's dissertation addresses the period 1945-1955³) was how to pursue a progressive political programme based on the defence of fundamental human rights while at the same time remaining true to its rationale for existence and retaining the loyalty of its white student base, much of which upheld the political *status quo*.

That NUSAS was not always a wholly white body is attested to by the withdrawal of its entire black membership by 1972 following the establishment of the exclusively black South African Students Organisation (SASO) in 1968. Incorporating into one structure both conservative white students and radical, mainly black students, placed additional strains on the integrity and cohesion of the national union.

¹ 'Nelson Mandela's address to a rally in Cape Town on his release from prison, 11 February 1990', <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4520> accessed 25.6.2014.

² *ibid.*

³ C. Larkin, 'Becoming liberal – a history of the National Union of South African Students, 1945-1955', MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2001.

Altbach has argued that significant differences existed between student activism in the industrialised nations of the (former) First World and those of the (former) Third World regarding their degree of radicalism, the issues which this activism addressed and the extent to which student activism was regarded as legitimate by the societies of which these students formed a part.⁴ It could be argued that NUSAS, composed of both black and white students was an uneasy amalgamation of both a First and Third World student union. For many white South Africans opposed to the National Party (NP) government, South Africa was a democracy, albeit an imperfect one.⁵ Thus for some anti-NP whites, the measures taken by the government after 1948 represented the dismantling of the democratic state. Thus, their protests, if any, were couched in preserving the *status quo* or harked back to a mythically better past. Many white students thus believed that NUSAS should have a very limited political role, if one at all, and that it should simply act as a student trade union and benefit society, adopting a 'students-as-such' orientation. For the majority of South Africans, denied civil rights and citizenship, South Africa was hardly democratic. Many black students believed then that NUSAS ought to pursue an overtly political agenda, a 'students-in-society' approach and like student organisations in the colonial world, play a leading role in the national liberation movement.

Divergence of opinion regarding the nature of a student union became more acute with the proscription of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC) following the Sharpeville massacre of March 1960. Though two new African student organisations aligned to the banned liberation movements did emerge in 1961, they all but collapsed at the universities in the face of the national security crackdown of 1963-4. Thus, with few legal alternatives, black students and some radical white ones came increasingly to view NUSAS as a potential vehicle for national liberation. This, together with the realisation that there was an inclination for black separatism led NUSAS to interrogate both its future political role in society and student affairs as well as grapple with the almost insoluble problem of how as a colour-blind body it could racially transform its leadership and membership to reflect the demographic realities of South African society without simultaneously compromising its commitment to non-racialism. The fallout from this attempt to recast itself within a more activist mould was used to great effect by the state in its efforts to fatally weaken NUSAS – by then one of the most radical organisations still legally

⁴ P. Altbach, 'Perspectives on student political activism', P. Altbach (ed), *Student political activism: an international reference handbook*, Greenwood Press, New York, Westport and London, 1989, pp. 4, 11, 13-15; T. Luescher-Mamashela, 'Theorising student activism in and beyond the 20th century: the contribution of Philip G. Altbach', <http://nasdevsa.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/theorising-student-activism-abstract-luescher-mamashela.pdf> accessed 1.1.2015, p. 6.

⁵ D. Everatt, *The origins of non-racialism: white opposition to apartheid in the 1950s*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 2009, p. 160.

operating – by slicing away its moderate and conservative and often apathetic mass membership.

Henceforward NUSAS charted a course dictated by the practical realities of an authoritarian political system and an almost fully segregated society by focussing on educational issues. It re-affirmed its commitment to working towards the restoration of academic freedom lost after the passage of university apartheid legislation in 1959, legislation against which NUSAS had fought a decade long, increasingly sophisticated national and international campaign. Protests against further encroachments into academic freedom were couched in terms of defending Western civilisation, a defence utilised by the white opposition in its rejection (often half-hearted) of apartheid measures and also by the government in its justification for its actions. NUSAS's policy during the latter half of the 1960s served only to further distance it from black students, the vast majority of whom were involuntarily cloistered in the isolated, authoritarian, ethnic universities which followed the implementation of university apartheid and the prohibition of further black student enrolment at the racially 'open' Universities of the Witwatersrand and Cape Town and the semi-'open' Natal. Students at the ethnic universities were denied basic human rights including freedom of movement and association – they faced drastic sanctions merely for associating with NUSAS – and had no experience of academic freedom. Like NUSAS they adapted to their environment and concluded that their quest for national student contact could only take place outside the bounds of NUSAS.

Significance of the study

A history of NUSAS reads like a 'who's who' of South Africa and elsewhere. It could be contended that participation in student structures provides an apprenticeship in leadership. A study of student organisations then can shed light on the earlier formative influences of those who in later life achieve prominence in public and private life - in academia, the arts, trade unions, business and politics. Historically, students have played an important role in politics and society. This is particularly the case with regards to nationalism. German and Italian students, for example, were leading protagonists in the nationalist revolutions of 1848 in their respective countries, while during the 1920s and 30s student unions were some of the first groups in Germany and Italy to embrace the integral nationalism of Hitler and Mussolini.⁶ In South Africa, Afrikaans-speaking students played a prominent role in the Afrikaans Language Movement (which resulted in the replacement of Dutch with Afrikaans

⁶ P. Altbach, *op. cit.*, pp. 2, 3; G. Giles, *Students and National Socialism in Germany*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Guildford, 1985.

as South Africa's co-official language in 1924)⁷ while they and their publications were at the forefront of developing and disseminating the new exclusive Afrikaner nationalism of the 1930s.⁸ It was black students (using a broader definition of 'students' to include school children) who rejected Afrikaans as a co-medium of instruction in 1976, precipitating the Soweto Uprising, a turning point in South Africa's history which marked the rejection of the entire system of apartheid and the claims of Afrikaner nationalism. During the 1960s students brought down governments in places as diverse as South Korea, South Vietnam, Japan, Turkey, Indonesia, Bolivia and Sudan⁹ while General De Gaulle fled France in the wake of the 1968 student revolts in Paris.¹⁰

Provided that their actions were grounded in and informed by Scientific Socialism, Lenin recognised the revolutionary potential of students in Tsarist Russia, even those from the middle class.¹¹ Herbert Marcuse, a leading neo-Marxist philosopher of the 1960s New Left (the New Left rejected Soviet-style Marxism, embraced the humanist writings of the early Marx, challenged traditional power structures and championed participatory democracy and new forms of consciousness) and 'guru' of the student left argued that in the face of the deradicalisation of the working class, students and other marginalised groups were the new revolutionary class.¹² The worldwide student revolts of the late 1960s, which had an impact on student activism in South Africa seemed to bear this out.

Altbach argues that perhaps the most lastingly important impact of student activism, particularly in the Western industrialised states, has been in the cultural sphere and the influence that student activism has had on 'broader societal norms'. The claims of the rights of minorities such as African-Americans, women and homosexuals, together with lifestyle choices such as abortion and birth control generally deemed permissive and immoral, were accepted and endorsed by students and through them, percolated into the rest of society, eventually gaining acceptance there too.¹³ The American Civil Rights and Anti-War Movements would perhaps less speedily have achieved the desegregation of the American South and the enfranchisement of African-Americans and the withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam had it not been for the leading role played by students. It was African students in

⁷ J. Fick, 'Afrikaner student politics – past and present', H. van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds), *Student perspectives on South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1972, pp. 58-63.

⁸ D. O' Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: class, capital and ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism, 1934-1948*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1983, p. 70.

⁹ D. Emmerson, 'Conclusion', D. Emmerson (ed), *Students and politics in developing nations*, Frederick Praeger, New York, Washington and London, 1968, p. 390.

¹⁰ P. Altbach, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹¹ V.I. Lenin, 'The tasks of the revolutionary youth, first letter, published in September 1903 in "Student", no. 2-3, signed N. Lenin', <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1003/sep/30b.htm> accessed 3.1.2015.

¹² A. Heywood, *Politics (third edition)*, Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke and New York, 2007, pp. 58, 59, 79, 308.

¹³ P. Altbach, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

the United Kingdom-based Committee of African Organisations who initiated the first economic boycott of South African goods in Britain in June 1959, this boycott being one of the forerunners of the all-embracing global Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM).¹⁴

NUSAS was a liberal organisation and committed to democracy. The strains of liberalism it espoused and the degree to which it embraced democracy changed over time. Liberalism is concerned with individual freedom and human rights, reason, tolerance and progress, the rule of law and constitutionalism.¹⁵ In the South African context it is intimately connected to race relations. Liberalism is universalist and disregards differences of race, ethnicity, culture and creed. Though South African liberalism is derived from classical Western liberalism, it is not an exclusively white phenomenon – there are and were black liberals. Cape liberalism - the form that classical liberalism took when transplanted in a racist society argued Friedman¹⁶ - was instrumental in the adoption of a non-racial franchise for all 'civilised' men in the nineteenth and twentieth century Cape Colony and Province respectively who met stringent educational and property criteria.

Cape liberalism existed side by side and often at odds with what Friedman refers to as a 'developmental liberalism', a social democratic strain.¹⁷ Developmental liberals were 'those who sought to build a liberalism rooted in the black majority' and who attempted 'to demonstrate that liberalism [was] consistent with majority aspirations' rather than the classic liberal assumption that 'majority aspirations ought to tailor themselves to liberal values'.¹⁸ In the context of liberal universalism, some liberals rejected Black Consciousness as black racism while others 'sanctioned' it.¹⁹ In 1994 South Africa became a liberal democracy. Though this had little to do with the influence and legacy of liberal organisations like NUSAS – a post-Cold War global and national liberal consensus pertained – literature relating to 'Third Wave' democratisation suggests that a democratic heritage improves the prognosis for the consolidation of democracy.²⁰

¹⁴ A. Lissoni, 'The South African liberation movements in exile, c. 1945-1970', PhD thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2008, pp. 58-62, 66, 67.

¹⁵ A. Heywood, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-47.

¹⁶ S. Friedman, 'The ambiguous legacy of liberalism: less a theory of society, more a state of mind?', P. Vale, L. Hamilton and E. Prinsloo (eds), *Intellectual traditions in South Africa: ideas, individuals and institutions*, University of KwaZulu Natal Press, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg, 2014, pp. 32, 33, 42.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 44.

²⁰ D. Glaser, *Politics and society in South Africa*, Sage, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, 2001, pp. 214-217.

Review of literature

To date, the history of NUSAS has yet to be written. In an examination of the foundation and early history of NUSAS, Linda Chisholm²¹ argues that though the all-white national union was 'non-political' and committed to nurturing a broad white South African nationalism, it contradictorily engaged with deeply divisive national political issues in its annual student parliaments and in its segregation-based "Bantu Studies Department". However, she contends that it was the staging of the Student Christian Association's 'Multi-racial student conference' at the black South African Native College, Fort Hare in 1930 that had the potential to shatter the national union's fragile white unity. My MA dissertation²² argues that NUSAS effectively abandoned segregation and white South Africanism in 1945 when it resolved to admit to membership students at Fort Hare and other black higher educational institutions. Henceforward NUSAS charted a distinctly liberal and even radical course in pursuit of 'democracy in education'. Against the background of mass political mobilisation and Cold War partisanship, the radical (mainly black) and liberal left parted company over the degree to which the still ostensibly non-political national union could oppose the apartheid measures of the new NP government. Consequently, by the end of 1955 most black affiliates had seceded, the radical left had been routed, leaving an avowedly liberal faction closely associated with the Liberal Party at the helm of the organisation.

In his 1985, six page case-study on NUSAS and 'the plight of liberalism', derived from secondary sources,²³ Benjamin Kline argues that NUSAS made the tactical compromise that South African liberalism has always accepted, namely: in order to win wide white support for its opposition to university apartheid in the 1950s, NUSAS 'side-stepped' segregation and focussed on the autonomy of the universities.²⁴ Nonetheless, its activism against university apartheid led to its much wider political and social engagement during the late 1950s and early 1960s. This alienated much of its white membership and led to the 'moderation' of NUSAS's more 'extreme' policies. A black backlash followed.²⁵ Kline concludes then that 'the incorporation of either moderate or radical ideals in a liberal framework has consistently alienated those left out and their failure to compromise has debilitated liberal activities'.²⁶

²¹ L. Chisholm, 'The early history of NUSAS: Leo Marquard's presidency, 1924-1930', BA (Honours) dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1976.

²² C. Larkin, *op. cit.*

²³ B. Kline, 'The National Union of South African Students: a case-study of the plight of liberalism, 1924-1977', *Journal of Modern African Studies* vol. 23 no. 1, March 1985.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 141.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 143.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 145.

In 1974, the *South African Outlook* published a series of articles on NUSAS to mark the national union's fiftieth anniversary. Former NUSAS president, John Daniel's, 'A history of NUSAS in action' is a skeletal account of the organisation from its foundation to 1974,²⁷ while his 'NUSAS 1963-73: ten years of conflict' is an incisive analysis of government strategy intended to weaken and ultimately silence NUSAS.²⁸ However, Martin Legassick's seminal monograph on the history of NUSAS from its inception until the mid-1960s remains the most significant and substantial study of the national union to date, even though it was penned almost half a century ago.²⁹ This argues that the structural reforms undertaken by NUSAS in the early 1950s brought together the politically diverse student bodies of the English-medium and black universities but only at the end of the decade were these reforms given 'ideological expression' thus enabling NUSAS to engage in political action and facilitating the return of its former black affiliates.³⁰ This doctoral thesis and the earlier Master's dissertation owe much to Legassick's insights. 'South Africa',³¹ co-authored by Legassick and 1960 NUSAS president, John Shingler, covers similar ground to Legassick's slightly earlier study, though in much abbreviated form as this book chapter also chronicles the history of white Afrikaans-speaking student organisations as well as developments within black student politics. Though written prior to the formation of SASO, Legassick and Shingler predicted that a new separate black student body would emerge - though probably abroad - as black students felt that NUSAS could not represent them.³² Moreover, given the complete rupture with black politics of the 1940s and 50s signalled by the security clampdown of the early 1960s, the 'attitudes, perspectives and policies' formulated by students at the ethnic universities (and schools) would, they prophetically believed, 'shape the strategy of the freedom struggle...for the next generation'.³³

Neville Curtis, Clive Keegan and Geoffrey Budlender, all leading members of NUSAS during some of the periods which they address in their respective brief histories of NUSAS believed that the inflexible, intolerant and ideological liberalism on which NUSAS based its actions during the latter half of the 1960s was alienating to NUSAS's black membership and was one of the reasons precipitating fissure.³⁴ In her pioneering study, Mabel Maimela contends

²⁷ J. Daniel, 'A history of NUSAS in action', *South African Outlook*, January 1974, pp. 3-9.

²⁸ J. Daniel, 'NUSAS 1963-1973: ten years of conflict', *South African Outlook*, January 1974, pp. 10-13, 17.

²⁹ M. Legassick, 'The National Union of South African Students: ethnic cleavage and ethnic integration in the universities', *Occasional paper no. 4, African Studies Center, University of California Los Angeles, University of California, Los Angeles*, 1967.

³⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 18, 20, 23.

³¹ M. Legassick and J. Shingler, 'South Africa', D. Emmerson (ed), *Students and politics in developing nations*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, Washington and London, 1968, pp. 103-145.

³² *ibid.*, pp. 136-137.

³³ *ibid.*, pp. 135, 139.

³⁴ N. Curtis and C. Keegan, 'The aspiration to a just society', H. van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds), *Student perspectives on South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1972; G. Budlender, 'Black Consciousness and the

that a co-operative, supportive and mutually dependent relationship existed between key figures within the Black Consciousness Movement and various liberal organisations. In so doing, she challenges the prevailing orthodoxy that the relationship between NUSAS and SASO was hostile and that Steve Biko, the founder of SASO, was anti-liberal and anti-white.³⁵ Ian Macqueen similarly argues that NUSAS and SASO activists 'maintained a dialogue' even after black students broke with the national union.³⁶ In their detailed history of the establishment and development of SASO and the Black Consciousness Movement, Mzamane, Maaba and Biko argue that relations between key NUSAS and SASO figures were cordial and co-operative. SASO was initially envisaged as a black pressure group within NUSAS and it was only the reaction of NUSAS which precipitated complete fissure.³⁷ This view seems to be implicitly supported by Legassick and Saunders, who, in their very brief account of NUSAS in the 1960s,³⁸ transcribe a letter from Steve Biko, one of the founders of SASO, to Duncan Innes, the 1968/9 NUSAS president in which Biko justifies the formation of the new black organisation.³⁹

Salim Badat asserts that SASO and its non-racial successor, the South African National Students' Congress were 'revolutionary national student organisations that constituted black students as an organised social force within the national liberation movement'.⁴⁰ He contends that SASO's initial recognition of NUSAS as South Africa's sole legitimate national student union was for strategic reasons as SASO did not have the support of all black students, many of whom were uncomfortable with the idea of a separate black body.⁴¹

Helen Lunn's study on identity, socialisation, education, student politics and the counter-culture, particularly music, concludes that the impact of a cosmopolitan counter-culture and the New Left was quite considerable on students at Wits and at Durban during the decade of the mid-1960s to 1970s.⁴² The title of N.L. Combrink's Master's dissertation suggests that it

liberal tradition: then and now', B. Pityana, M. Ramphela, M. Mpumlwana and L. Wilson (eds), *Bounds of possibility: the legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness*, David Philip and Zed Books, Cape Town, London and New York, 1992.

³⁵ M. Maimela, 'Black Consciousness and white liberals in South Africa: paradoxical anti-apartheid politics', DLitt et Phil thesis, University of South Africa, 1999, pp. 3, 7, 8, 15.

³⁶ I. Macqueen, 'Reimagining South Africa: Black Consciousness, radical Christianity and the New Left, 1967-1977', PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2011, 'Summary'.

³⁷ M. Mzamane, B. Maaba and N. Biko, 'The Black Consciousness Movement', South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 2, 1970-1980*, UNISA Press, Pretoria, 2006.

³⁸ M. Legassick and C. Saunders, 'Aboveground activity in the 1960s', South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 1, 1960-1970*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 684-5.

⁴⁰ S. Badat, *Black student politics, higher education and apartheid: from SASO to SANSCO, 1968-1990*, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, 1999, 'Preface'.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 87.

⁴² H. Lunn, 'Hippies, radicals and the 'sounds of silence', cultural dialectics at two South African universities 1966-1976', PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu Natal, Durban, 2010.

would cover similar ground to that of Lunn's.⁴³ However, the bulk of this study is concerned with the chronicling of international student protest, the early history of NUSAS and the Afrikaans student movement and NUSAS's campaign of 1956-9 against the enactment of university apartheid legislation.⁴⁴ Combrink argues that a small group of dedicated activists constructed a powerful, tightly knit organisation which, with its creation and co-option of the 'Standing Committee of SRC Presidents', embarked on well-co-ordinated, centrally directed 'agitation'⁴⁵ against, for example, the 1962 General Law Amendment Act⁴⁶ and the new apartheid university authorities at Fort Hare in 1960.⁴⁷ Though Curtis and Keegan aver that NUSAS was arguably the most powerful student union globally during the early 1960s,⁴⁸ Combrink overstates its power and monolithic character. Students at Rhodes and the two white Natal centres were notoriously conservative and guarded their autonomy jealously. Hence they were often hesitant or were unambiguously opposed to the employment of, or any association with, 'unorthodox methods of manipulation', 'uproar' and 'agitation', attested to by their complete absence from the events at Fort Hare discussed by Combrink.

Based on in-depth interviews, Daniel Massey paints a vivid picture of student affairs at Fort Hare prior to and after the state expropriation of the college in 1960. He charts the emergence of the 'student resistance', an ANC grouping actively opposed to the transformation of Fort Hare into an apartheid 'tribal' institution and engaged too in political work outside the college.⁴⁹ Donovan Williams's history of Fort Hare to 1960 also devotes considerable attention to student activities.⁵⁰ Bruce Murray's scholarly and detailed history of the University of the Witwatersrand from 1939 until the imposition of university apartheid in 1959⁵¹ was an invaluable source of information for this study both in terms of the information it uncovered and the insights it offered. Various university, college and seminary institutional histories consider the activities of their respective student bodies, including their relationship to NUSAS.⁵² Particularly useful was Sean Greyling's Master's dissertation,⁵³ which threw

⁴³ N. Combrink, 'Die manifestasie van studentemag en die wortels van studente-oproer aan die Engelstalige universiteite van Suid Afrika sedert die jare sestig- 'n eietydse Geestesgeskiedenis', MA dissertation, University of the Orange Free State, 1982. ('The manifestation of student power and the roots of student revolt at the English-speaking universities of South Africa since the 1960s: a contemporary (?)spirit history')

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 1-177.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 101-177, 198-199.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 230-237.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 204-206, 209-217, 220.

⁴⁸ N. Curtis and C. Keegan, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁴⁹ D. Massey, *Under protest: the rise of student resistance at the University of Fort Hare*, UNISA Press, Pretoria, 2010.

⁵⁰ D. Williams, *A history of the University College of Fort Hare, South Africa – the 1950s: the waiting years*, Edwin Mellen, Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter, 2001.

⁵¹ B. Murray, *Wits the 'open the years: a history of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1939-1959*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1997.

⁵² E. Brookes, *The University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg*, Natal University Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1966; R. Cameron, 'Some political, ecumenical and theological aspects of the history of the Federal Theological Seminary: 1963-1975', MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1984; R. Currey, *Rhodes University 1904-1970 – a*

new light on the fateful decision of the Rhodes University Council to impose social segregation on NUSAS's 1967 national congress. A number of studies of student politics at the various individual campuses affiliated or not to NUSAS provide a rich source of information⁵⁴ though they are not always readily accessible. Jonty Driver very generously sent me a chapter of his unpublished memoir relating to his critical NUSAS presidency.⁵⁵ Glenn Moss's 'generational memoir' of the 1970s examines the re-structuring of NUSAS during the early 1970s and the changing nature of Wits student politics.⁵⁶

For many white students at NUSAS's affiliated campuses, contact with their counterparts at the Afrikaans-medium universities was of great importance. Accordingly, NUSAS devoted much time and effort to this controversial issue, even publishing a history of its relations with the Afrikaans-medium centres and their student organisations written by 1958-9 NUSAS president, Neville Rubin.⁵⁷ Few studies exist of white Afrikaans-speaking university students. Joanne Duffy takes a 'town and gown' approach in her study of Afrikaner unity, the NP and the 'radical right' at Stellenbosch between 1934 and 1948. She highlights the role played by 'political professors' in championing various radical right Afrikaans organisations and discusses the rise and fall of the *Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond* (ANS) at Stellenbosch, an extreme Afrikaner nationalist student union founded soon after the three northern Afrikaans-medium universities seceded from NUSAS in 1933.⁵⁸ In his study of the *Afrikaanse Studentebond* (ASB) in the period between 1948 and 1980, C. Heymans engages with the oft-asserted allegation that the ASB was the student front of the NP. Through an examination of this Afrikaner nationalist student organisation's establishment, its Christian National ideology, its concern with Afrikaner identity and unity, its commitment to

chronicle, Rhodes University Library Press, Grahamstown, 1970; C. White, *From despair to hope: the Turfloop experience*, UNIN Press, Sovenga, 1997.

⁵³ S. Greyling, 'Rhodes University during the segregation and apartheid eras, 1933-1990', MA dissertation, Rhodes University, 2007.

⁵⁴ T. Beard, 'Background to student activities at the University College of Fort Hare', H. van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds), *Student perspectives on South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1972; R. Bernstein, J. Borkum, N. Jacobson and M. Nkasawe, 'Going for sparrows with machine guns, NUSAS 1966-1974', BA (Honours) documentary, University of Cape Town, 1995; F. Burrows, 'UCT, student activism and apartheid 1957-1968', BA (Honours) dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2003; R. Erbmman, 'Conservative revolutionaries, anti-apartheid activism at the University of Cape Town 1963-1973', BA thesis, University of Oxford, 2005, [http://www.sahistory-
org-za/pages/libraryresources/articles/1963_1973_conservative_revolutionaries.htm](http://www.sahistory-
org-za/pages/libraryresources/articles/1963_1973_conservative_revolutionaries.htm) accessed 20.1.2014; A. Heffernan, 'Black Consciousness's lost leader: Abram Tiro, the University of the North, and the seeds of South Africa's student movement in the 1970s', *Journal of Southern African Studies* vol. 41 no. 1, 2015; M. Middelman, 'UCT student reaction to university apartheid 1953-1959', African History II research essay, University of Cape Town, 1979; F. Tobias, 'The women of Wits, 1939-1959', BA (Honours) dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand; T. White, 'Student disturbances at Fort Hare in 1955', *Kleio* no. 29, 1997.

⁵⁵ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS presidency (1963-4)', Unpublished memoir, provided by Jonty Driver.

⁵⁶ G. Moss, *The new radicals: a generational memoir of the 1970s*, Jacana, Auckland Park, 2014.

⁵⁷ N. Rubin, *History of the relations between NUSAS, the Afrikaanse Studentebond and the Afrikaans university centres*, NUSAS, Cape Town, 1960.

⁵⁸ J. Duffy, *The politics of ethnic nationalism: Afrikaner unity, the National Party and the radical right in Stellenbosch*, Routledge, New York and London, 2006.

apartheid and its attitudes towards other white and black South Africans, he concludes that the ASB largely mirrored NP policy even though it had no formal connections to the party.⁵⁹

Enjoying both a close relationship and an overlapping membership with NUSAS was the liberal, anti-apartheid-inclined National Catholic Federation of Students (NCFS), the subject of Anthony Egan's monograph. Like NUSAS, the NCFS experienced a conservative backlash in the mid-1960s against both its growing activism and, following disclosures that some of NUSAS's past officers were implicated in sabotage, its association with NUSAS. Much of this opposition was driven by students and clergy at Pretoria, where, unlike NUSAS, the NCFS enjoyed official recognition. With the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement, the NCFS, like NUSAS, was confronted with the exodus of its black membership.⁶⁰

Sources and method

The sources for this study are drawn largely from the NUSAS Archive, housed in the Manuscripts and Archives division of the Jagger Library at the University of Cape Town. During the last decade, selected items from the NUSAS Archive, mainly congress minutes and sources relating to key events in South African history, have been digitized and can be accessed at 'Aluka', the online library of resources from and concerned with Africa. The NUSAS Archive is extensive. It is composed of annual reports to and minutes of NUSAS's annual congresses and executive meetings, executive circulars and correspondence between the members of the NUSAS executive and members of affiliated SRCs. Other files are devoted to the activities of the NUSAS-affiliated and non-affiliated student bodies, civil society bodies and individuals connected with these as well as the various campaigns mounted by NUSAS. For the period spanning the mid-1950s and the first half of the 1960s, the challenge to the researcher is how to make sense of too much information, rather than too little. After 1965, the volume of material, particularly in terms of the correspondence, dwindles significantly; an indication perhaps of both the crisis and decline faced by NUSAS during the latter half of the 1960s as well as a growing concern for security. NUSAS's mail was opened from as early as 1955. The number of spies on SRCs and even in NUSAS increased incrementally during the 1960s. By 1963, NUSAS's telephone was tapped and its office bugged. In the post-apartheid period, Jonty Driver (NUSAS president from 1963-4) was presented with typed copies of his originally handwritten letters as well as transcripts of conversations occurring in the NUSAS head office in Cape Town discovered by a researcher in no less than the personal files of John Vorster, then Minister of Justice and later prime-

⁵⁹ C. Heymans, 'Die politieke en ideologiese strominge en aktiwiteite in en om die Afrikaanse Studentebond (1948-1980)', MA dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 1981.

⁶⁰ A. Egan, *The politics of a South African Catholic student movement, 1960-1987*, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, 1991.

minister⁶¹ – an indication of the degree to which Vorster believed NUSAS posed a threat to state interests. During the early 1960s, correspondence relating to the new ethnic universities was conducted in code.⁶² Horst Kleinschmidt, NUSAS vice-president in 1969, relates that during his period of association with NUSAS, information was conveyed through hand-delivered messages and was often not recorded.⁶³

The monthly, fortnightly, and in the case of Wits and UCT, weekly campus newspapers provide a rich and varied source of information on NUSAS, student politics and campus life. Campus newspapers reflect the characteristics and concerns of the different student bodies, in the process offering a unique perspective on how NUSAS, student and sometimes even national politics were perceived by individual student bodies. With the establishment of a NUSAS-aligned student press union in the 1960s, the unique factor declined as reports on campus and NUSAS activity became syndicated. However, this was made up for by the increase in volume of NUSAS and national campus news disseminated which mitigated too the thinning out of the NUSAS Archive. The student publications of the Afrikaans-medium universities were also consulted though not as extensively as those at the English-medium centres. They (particularly *Die Matie* at Stellenbosch and *Die Wapad* at Potchefstroom) offer a fascinating insight into the conflict and divisions within the Nationalist world which was one of the factors which propelled both English- and Afrikaans-speaking students at their respective campuses to seek co-operation with one another, a frequent phenomenon which posed a challenge to NUSAS's hegemony. However essential student newspapers and periodicals were to this study, their numbering systems often posed problems when referencing. With a rapid turnover of student editors, numbering systems changed and often became confused or were omitted altogether. Accordingly, when citing some student periodicals, the volume and/or issue numbers have been omitted entirely. Those for *Varsity*, the *Witwatersrand Student* and *Rhodeo* are usually cited in full designations, though there are some omissions too. National newspapers were also a valuable source of information and were helpful in locating NUSAS in the wider social and political milieu.

Universities were the object of government attention during the 1950s and 1960s and so official publications in the form of reports of commissions of inquiry as well as records of parliamentary debates have also been consulted.

⁶¹ C. J. Driver, 'NUSAS presidency (1963-4)', *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁶² See BC 586 M1, the file relating to Fort Hare.

⁶³ Horst Kleinschmidt telephonically, 7.10.2014.

Oral information was collected late in the study. Though the timing for this was unorthodox in the sense that the thesis was nearing completion, such an approach allowed for the identification of issues and events requiring further clarification and elaboration as well as confirmation that they were indeed of sufficient importance to merit discussion. Those selected to be interviewed were chosen on the basis of their involvement in NUSAS and/or membership of their SRC, their attendance at an annual congress or the leading role they played in an important event discussed in this study. Most importantly, they needed to be locatable and contactable. The latter consideration proved to be a significant hurdle as most candidates were retired people whose contact details were generally not publicly available. Letters or emails were sent to seventeen prospective interviewees. Eight replied, seven agreeing to participate while another initiated contact himself. Of those who did not reply, I subsequently discovered that three were critically ill or incapacitated. Personalised questions were drawn up for each interviewee and were either answered via email or telephonically. Given that this study focuses on events that occurred half a century or more ago, it was not surprising to discover that most protagonists had rather hazy recollections of their student days and often had little to add to the minutiae of events in which they were participants. Nonetheless, some surprising new information did surface particularly when interviewees volunteered information, which they believed was of importance and which was not directly related to any of the specific questions posed. Unfortunately, as the deadline for the submission of the thesis loomed, the responses of two key informants were still outstanding.

Chapter breakdown

Much of the material for the first section of chapter two is drawn from my Master's dissertation, discussed earlier.⁶⁴ The first part of this introductory chapter will locate NUSAS within the social and university milieu in which it operated. It will examine the composition and ideological orientation of the different student bodies represented in the national union as well as the changes wrought in student life during the 1940s, 50s and 60s.

The second section will trace the early history of NUSAS from its establishment in 1924 until the starting point of the current study in 1956. It will examine the challenges posed to the 'non-political' NUSAS by the rise of an exclusive Afrikaner nationalism on the one hand and a more inclusive liberalism on the other. It will argue that the efforts to build a united student front to fight the imposition of apartheid on the universities, the declared policy of the NP after its 1948 electoral victory, were hampered by conflict between the liberal and radical left

⁶⁴ C. Larkin, *op. cit.*

over the degree to which NUSAS could engage in political action as well as its alignment in the Cold War.

Chapter three will evaluate how successful NUSAS was in crafting a united front against the legislation of university apartheid during the period of 1956-7. It will also examine the implications for the future direction of NUSAS policy following the re-affiliation of Fort Hare to NUSAS in 1957, the adoption of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the basis of NUSAS policy and the decision taken to defy the provisions of the 'church clause' of the 1957 Native Laws Amendment Act which proscribed multi-racial gatherings in white urban areas.

Chapter four will be concerned with the relationship between NUSAS and its affiliated SRCs on the one hand and the ASB and its respective affiliates on the other. White student co-operation posed a challenge to NUSAS because while its primary reason for existence was to foster and facilitate student contact, contact outside its structures threatened its hegemony.

Chapter five will argue that though NUSAS continued to base its opposition to university apartheid on the defence of university autonomy, it came to the realisation that this was morally untenable because in so doing, it upheld the right to racially discriminate. Equally contradictory was the commitment to defending a colour-blind academic programme and admissions policy while simultaneously upholding a social colour bar. This was brought sharply into focus when the United Party's opposition to the passage of the Extension of University Education and Fort Hare Transfer Bills were based on the defence of university autonomy. Further, this chapter will attempt to demonstrate that the claim by the government that its university apartheid policy was motivated by altruistic developmentalism, had only a thin veneer of sincerity, the majority of NP members of parliament employing overtly racist, white supremacist and even Eugenicist arguments in justification for the removal of black students from the predominantly white universities and the establishment of separate black higher education institutions.

Chapter six will point to the growing distance developing between NUSAS and much of its mass membership in the wake of Sharpeville, the former pursuing an ever more radical policy, the latter becoming more conservative and attempting to effect white student co-operation.

The relationship of NUSAS to the new black ethnic universities will be the subject of chapter seven. This chapter will evaluate how successful NUSAS was in endeavouring to render university apartheid unworkable. It will be argued that NUSAS was radicalised by its increased association with the banned or semi-restricted Congresses at Fort Hare and the black section of Natal University (UNNE), the latter the springboard into the new ethnic university colleges in Natal. On the other hand, the emergence of two new exclusively African student organisations aligned to the banned liberation movements threatened NUSAS with the loss of its African membership.

Chapter eight will examine the smear campaign against NUSAS launched by John Vorster in 1963. It will be argued that this campaign was aimed at fatally weakening NUSAS by slicing away its moderate to conservative student base. Moreover, it will be contended that the newly established conservative student societies were closely associated with the state and were intended to absorb all of those expected to resign from NUSAS in the wake of the smear campaign.

Chapter nine will address the core problem for NUSAS and radical white activists in general, namely: how to play a meaningful role in the struggle against apartheid. At the Botha's Hill Leadership Seminar in April 1964, NUSAS activists grappled with this central problem as well as the equally pressing issue of how NUSAS as a white-led but colour-blind body could effect Africanisation without compromising its commitment to non-racialism. Some former NUSAS leaders came to the conclusion that the resolution of the central problem lay in abandoning the liberal commitment to non-violence and embracing the extra-legal African Resistance Movement.

Chapter ten will examine the attempts by the government to impose social segregation on the universities. It will be argued that this had a dual function: firstly to bring the universities into line with government policy and secondly to deliver the mortal blow to both the anti-apartheid student governments and NUSAS. Both the campus conservative societies and the government-intimidated university authorities were the vehicles for achieving these goals. It was the application of campus social segregation which precipitated both the formation of SASO and the New Left-inspired student protests.

This thesis will generally follow a chronological approach. The exceptions to this will be the thematic chapters four, seven, eight and nine. One of the drawbacks associated with a thematic approach in an historical study is the danger of repetition. This will be largely avoided in the first two instances but much less so in the last two. Incorporating chapter nine

into chapter eight was seriously considered. However, the impact of chapter nine, arguably the core of the thesis as it engages with NUSAS's attempts to resolve the central problem faced by a predominantly white anti-apartheid organisation in white apartheid South Africa, would be seriously compromised in so doing. Thus, in order to understand how the state and the conservative student associations exploited the revelations and disclosures arising from Botha's Hill and the ARM, it will be necessary to provide a skeletal synopsis of these in chapter eight.

South Africa's racial categorisation system from the apartheid era still pertains. This study of necessity will employ these racial terms, namely 'African', 'coloured', 'Indian' and 'white'. 'Black', unless otherwise specified, will refer to all those (African, coloured and Indian) oppressed and discriminated against because they were not classified 'white'. Offensive and derogatory racial terms for South Africa's population, employed extensively in the period covered by this study, will only be used if a contemporary source is quoted directly.

CHAPTER TWO

A history of NUSAS to 1955

Introduction

By 1956, the starting point of this study, the National Union of South African Students had been in existence for more than thirty years. It grew substantially in terms of the scope of its activities, reflecting changes in South African society, and developed a composition and political orientation very different to that envisaged by its founders and its early membership. This chapter will chart the establishment and early development of NUSAS and its response in the 1930s and 1940s to the dual challenges of Afrikaner nationalism and the desire for a more racially inclusive organisation. The accession to power of the ethnically exclusive National Party on a platform of extreme racial separation in 1948 presented NUSAS with new, ultimately insoluble problems. The attempt to build a united student front against the implementation of apartheid at the universities was hindered by disagreement over the degree to which NUSAS could adopt an overtly political programme and, in the context of the Cold War, the alignment of its international policy. This chapter will conclude by chronicling how this conflict was temporarily resolved in 1955 at the expense of NUSAS's black and radical left membership when power shifted decisively to a faction closely associated with the South African Liberal Party.

The foundation of NUSAS

NUSAS was founded in 1924 as a forum for white English- and Afrikaans-speaking students, who, despite their disparate backgrounds and bitter history of conflict, were believed to have, as students, common interests, needs and concerns.¹ The inspiration for the creation of a national union came from Leo Marquard, a graduate of Grey University College, Bloemfontein, who, while a Rhodes scholar at Oxford, had witnessed and participated in the formation of both the international student body, the *Confederation Internationale des Etudiants* (CIE) and the British National Union of Students (NUS). Informed by the liberal nationalism which underpinned the newly established League of Nations, the student founders of the CIE, many of whom had experienced the horrors of the First World War, hoped that an international forum fostering tolerance and understanding between students of different nations would defuse conflict and so avert

¹ Objects of NUSAS

'To represent the students of this country nationally and internationally and to maintain their co-operation with students of other countries. To promote the education and social interests of the students in entire independence of all religious and political propaganda. To co-operate with any organisation having kindred aims.' *NUSAS Handbook 1932*. An earlier source is unavailable; Cited in L. Chisholm, 'The early history of NUSAS: Leo Marquard's presidency, 1924-1930', BA (Honours) dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1976, p. 95.

another world conflagration. NUS and NUSAS were both established for the purpose of participating in the CIE.

NUSAS was modelled on NUS and thus absorbed the former's ideological orientation. Thus, like NUS, NUSAS styled itself 'non-political'.² In South Africa, the meaning of the term 'non-political' shifted and was re-interpreted over time. This generated much conflict within the national union and is a major theme of this study. When NUSAS was formed in 1924, a 'non-political' organisation eschewed 'party politics' and specifically refrained from aggravating the 'racial issue', the fragile relationship between English- and Afrikaans-speaking whites shattered by the South African War and again ruptured during the First World War. Marquard, an Afrikaner impatient with narrow patriotism and nationalism,³ desired a student organisation which championed student internationalism, and within South Africa looked beyond the differences of ethnicity to the common interests of all white students. This objective - the need to foster a broad white South African national feeling - accorded well with the political sentiments of a significant portion of the white electorate. Based on a policy of reconciliation between the two white 'races', the South African Party (SAP) government took both the former Boer republics and British colonies into the Union of South Africa in 1910. The National Party (NP), which ruled (initially in an electoral pact with the English-orientated white working class Labour Party) from 1924 to 1933, though a vehicle of Afrikaner nationalism, was also committed to a broad white South African nationalism within the framework of a two streamed policy of equality between the two white language groups. Nearly all whites shared a common fear of 'swamping' by the majority black African population. Thus a broad white South African nationalism and white reconciliation were founded on a 'common native policy', namely, segregation. Segregation envisaged the creation of 'separate worlds' for black and white and thus eventual spatial, political, economic and social separation. Segregation and the pursuit of a common white studenthood were the reasons for the exclusion of the black South African Native College (Fort Hare) from NUSAS in 1924. As Marquard, no segregationist himself, put it later: 'at that time most [white] people ... would have thought such a step "premature" and I do not believe the inaugural conference would ever have been held if I had invited Fort Hare'.⁴

South African inter-war liberalism

Marquard, like a significant minority of active members of NUSAS in the 1920s and 1930s,

² E. Ashby and M. Anderson, *The rise of the student estate in Britain*, MacMillan, London, 1970, p. 61; M. Shaw, 'Great Britain', P. Altbach (ed), *Student political activism: an international reference handbook*, Greenwood Press, New York, Westport and London, 1989, p. 238.

³ L. Chisholm, *op. cit.*, p. viii.

⁴ L. Marquard, 'A national union of students', *South African Outlook*, January 1974, p. 2.

was a liberal. South African liberalism is difficult to define because it is composed of a number of diverse strands and in the context of the black-white racial order has a peculiarity of its own which sets it apart from Western liberalism from which it is derived. A South African liberal could be described as a 'friend of the native' – someone who advanced a 'more generous' policy towards the black population than other whites.⁵ This somewhat unflattering description erroneously implies that liberalism is an exclusively white phenomenon, which it is not. Leading members of, for example, the African National Congress, were, and are liberals. South African liberals uphold and defend vigorously individual rights, freedoms, justice and the rule of law. Liberals believe in the possibility of human progress and thus many South African liberals of the inter-war years were 'welfare liberals' championing black education, health care and the improvement of living conditions. The major providers of black welfare were mission Christians, who preached a social gospel rooted in the 'brotherhood of man'⁶ which implied a belief in a common society and political equality. However, for mission and welfare liberals, a common society and black political and social equality were distant goals to be achieved incrementally.

Many white liberals of the interwar period paternalistically believed that they knew what was good for Africans and what they should be protected from and thus either supported segregation or operated within such a framework. Liberals believed in the power of persuasion. They thus lobbied influential liberal public figures and worked within government departments to achieve their goals. The 'non-political' South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), to which NUSAS was affiliated, was as the former's name suggests, the premier liberal research think tank on black–white relations, providing welfare liberals with scientifically derived data on which to base their campaigns for the amelioration of black living conditions. Liberals believe in the efficacy of contact, co-operation and dialogue. Liberal bodies such as the Joint Councils of Europeans and Africans provided a forum for liberal, moderate black and white opinion and acted as a political safety valve for the black population, most of who were excluded from political participation. On a political level, the crowning achievement of South African liberalism was the nineteenth century non-racial Cape constitution, which granted the franchise to all 'civilised' men in the Colony. This qualified franchise was enshrined in the Union constitution of 1910 though liberals failed to extend it to the rest of the country. Extending the Cape's non-racial franchise and increasingly, in the hostile segregationist racist milieu after 1910, preserving it, became the major political project of South African liberalism.

⁵ R. Elphick, 'Mission Christianity and inter-war liberalism', J. Butler, R. Elphick and D. Welsh (eds), *Democratic liberalism in South Africa: its history and prospect*, Wesleyan University Press and David Philip, Middletown, Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1987, p. 66.

⁶ R. Elphick, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75.

From the mid-1930s, the inclusion of Fort Hare in NUSAS on the basis of a common studenthood was the major aim of NUSAS liberals and was one of the primary reasons for splitting the fledgling organisation straight down the middle. In order to discuss this, it is necessary briefly to examine the nature of the universities whose student bodies comprised NUSAS.

The characteristics and composition of South African universities

In 1918 the South African College (founded in 1829) and Victoria College (founded in 1866) were transformed by an Act of Parliament into fully autonomous institutions of higher education and became the Universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch respectively. At the same time, the Transvaal University College (TUC) with branches in Johannesburg (founded as the South African School of the Mines and Technology in 1904) and Pretoria (founded in 1908), Grey University College (GUC), Bloemfontein (founded in 1904), the Natal University College (NUC), in Pietermaritzburg (founded in 1909), Rhodes University College, Grahamstown (founded in 1904) and Huguenot University College (HUC), Wellington (founded in 1874) became constituent university colleges of the federal examining body, the University of South Africa, formerly the University of the Cape of Good Hope. To these were added at a later stage, Potchefstroom University College for Christian Higher Education (PUCCHE), established in 1919 and the Durban branch of Natal University in 1923, which had evolved from the Durban Technical College.⁷ In 1922, TUC Johannesburg became the independent University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and in 1930, TUC Pretoria became the University of Pretoria. In 1949, Natal, Potchefstroom, the Orange Free State and Rhodes became independent universities with Fort Hare falling under Rhodes. Over time, each institution developed a distinctive character and ethos of its own.

The Universities of Cape Town (UCT), the Witwatersrand (Wits), Natal and Rhodes were regarded as English-speaking institutions. UCT, like its predecessor, the South African College, adopted a 'universalist' approach to education and within the local context embraced a policy of broad white South Africanism. South Africanism was not really put into practice as the university failed to adopt bilingualism and moreover, maintained its British character and orientation.⁸ Wits owed its existence to the needs of the rapidly industrialising and expanding Witwatersrand, and, like UCT, exuded an air of 'minor British provincialism'.⁹ The British orientation of Wits and UCT occurred despite the presence at

⁷ E. Brookes, *A history of the University of Natal*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1966, p. 29.

⁸ H. Phillips, *The University of Cape Town 1918-1948*, UCT Press, Cape Town, 1993, pp. 114, 116-117.

⁹ B. Murray, *Wits - the early years: a history of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and its precursors (1896-1939)*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1982, p. 327.

both institutions of a significant minority of Afrikaans-speaking students. At Wits their numbers declined from a quarter of the student body in 1939 to less than seven percent in 1964 while at UCT during the same period they dropped from a high of forty percent to just over nine percent.¹⁰ Their numbers declined for cultural and political reasons¹¹ as well as because more course offerings became available at the Afrikaans-medium universities in the 1940s and 1950s. Faculties of Medicine and Engineering were opened at Pretoria in 1943 and 1956 respectively and at Stellenbosch in 1956 and 1943.¹² NUC was located in a province where strong ties to Britain and sporadic separatist tendencies characterised its English-speaking inhabitants, the bulk of the white population. Thus NUC was an overwhelmingly English-speaking institution, though its Durban branch (UND), with its (white) part-time classes¹³ attracted an Afrikaans-speaking minority, as did Pietermaritzburg's Agricultural Faculty.¹⁴ In 1936 a separate black branch of NUC (University of Natal Non-European – (UNNE) was opened at Sastri College in Durban. It offered a limited number of degree courses to black students (initially mainly Indian) on a part-time basis, staff from the white UND duplicating their lectures at the black campus after hours.¹⁵ Post-matric students at Adams College were regarded as internal students of NUC too, until the mission institution's closure in the 1950s.¹⁶ The establishment of Rhodes in Grahamstown, as the university's name suggests, was intimately connected to the British imperial project.¹⁷ As such it was composed of students almost solely of English-speaking background and, like NUC (Pietermaritzburg), attracted a large number from across the Limpopo.¹⁸ Nonetheless, Afrikaans-speakers played a prominent role in student affairs at Rhodes during the 1950s and 60s. Although these universities were defined as 'English', English speakers were ethnically, culturally and even linguistically heterogeneous, being of English, Scottish, Afrikaans, Yiddish, East European, Mediterranean and North European background. This was particularly true of Wits, where the student body, even in

¹⁰ Report of the Youth Worker at the University of the Witwatersrand of the Nederduits Hervormde or Gereformeerde Church to the Synod of the Church cited in *Spoorslag* vol. 1 no. 3, June 1951; H. Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 225; B. Murray, *Wits the 'open' years: a history of the University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg, 1939-1959*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1997, p. 166; G. Viljoen, 'The Afrikaans universities and particularism', H. van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds), *The future of the university in Southern Africa*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1978, p. 175.

¹¹ H. Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 368.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 225; B. Murray, *Wits the 'open' years*, p. 173.

¹³ E. Brookes, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

¹⁴ In 1956 Afrikaans-speaking students comprised approximately 8% of the total Natal student body and 3.1% in 1964. T.F. Pettigrew, 'Personality and socio-cultural factors in inter-group attitudes: a cross national comparison', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* vol. 2 no. 1, March 1958, p. 35; G. Viljoen, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

¹⁵ E. Brookes, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45; *SA Student*, October 1950.

¹⁶ E. Brookes, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

¹⁷ R. Currey, *Rhodes University 1904-1970 – a Chronicle*, Rhodes University Library Press, Grahamstown, 1970, p. 12; R. Buckland and T. Neville, *A story of Rhodes: Rhodes University 1904 to 2004*, MacMillan, Braamfontein, 2004, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸ R. Buckland and T. Neville, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

the early 1970s, reflected the cosmopolitan origins¹⁹ of the founders of the Witwatersrand mining towns. To the category of 'English-speakers' could be added some of the black (coloured, Indian and African) students who enrolled in very small but increasing numbers at UCT and Wits from the 1920s onwards. In 1949 black students comprised approximately four percent of the student bodies of UCT and Wits.²⁰ At UCT in 1956 they made up less than eight percent, in 1959, over twelve percent and in 1966 just over six percent. In the corresponding years at Wits these figures were under five percent, rising to six percent and dropping to just two and a half percent.²¹

The South African Native College (SANC), or Fort Hare University College from 1952, could also be considered an English-medium institution. Established on the old Eastern frontier of the Cape Colony at Alice in 1916, by missionaries of the United Free Church of Scotland, it was intended to provide higher secondary education and from 1923, university tuition for Africans in Southern Africa.²² Fort Hare embodied the benevolent paternalism of mission Christianity and conservative liberalism. Students were groomed into 'Christian', 'English', 'gentlemen' and 'women' and on this basis could expect to enter the 'civilised' white world, albeit on an unequal basis. This quasi-assimilationist missionary paternalism was at odds with that of the white segregationist electorate and from the 1950s came to be resented by many Fort Hare students too.²³ This will be discussed later. Fort Hare was a prestigious institution. It could count amongst its alumni many Africans prominent in public life and Southern Africa's liberation movements.²⁴ The college attracted a significant number of coloured and Indian students but to retain its African character, non-African enrolment was kept below thirty percent.²⁵ For those who attended the college, Fort Hare embodied, uniquely for South Africa, an embryonic non-racial society. Most students came

¹⁹ T.F. Pettigrew, *op. cit.*, p. 35; H. Lunn, 'Hippies, radicals and the sounds of silence': cultural dialectics at two South African universities 1966-1976, PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu Natal, Durban, 2010, pp. 28-30.

²⁰ Percentages derived from student enrolment in Union of South Africa (UG 64), *Department of Education, Arts and Science Annual Report 1950*, Government Printer, Pretoria, 1950.

²¹ At UCT the actual number of black students to the total was 1956: 339/4377; 1959: 633/5104; 1966: 401/6392. At Wits these were: 1956: 213/4656; 1959: 307/5120; 1966: 195/7650. M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1956-7, 1961, 1966*, South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1957, 1961, 1966. At Natal these figures were 1949: 227/1869 (12%); 1956: 415/2604 (19%); 1959: 726/3405 (21%); 1966: 688/5242 (13%). Union of South Africa (UG 64), *Department of Education, Arts and Science Annual Report 1950*, Government Printer, Pretoria, 1950; Union of South Africa (No UG no), *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on separate training facilities for non-Europeans at universities, 1953-4 (Holloway Commission)*, Government Printer, Pretoria, 1954, p. 33; M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1956-7, 1961, 1966*, South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1957, 1961, 1966.

²² D. Williams, *A history of the University College of Fort Hare, South Africa – the 1950s: the waiting years*, Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter, 2001, pp. 3-4.

²³ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of mass meetings 1951-1956', 28.3.1951; 23.5.1951; 17.3.1952; 21.5.1952; 24.3.1954; *South African Native College Calendar*, 1951, p. 63; 1952, p. 82.

²⁴ These included Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Govan Mbeki, Z.K. Matthews, Chris Hani of the African National Congress, Robert Sobukwe and Anton Lembede of the Pan Africanist Congress, Robert Mugabe of the Zimbabwe African National Union –Patriotic Front and Ntsu Mokhele of the Basutoland Congress Party.

²⁵ H. Burrows, A. Kerr, Z. Matthews, *A short pictorial history of the University College of Fort Hare 1916-1959*, Lovedale, Alice, 1961, p. 48. A quota was imposed on the enrolment of Indian students in 1944 when they comprised fifteen percent of the student population. *Fort Hare Calendar*, 1945, p. 70.

from the Eastern Cape but by the 1950s larger numbers hailed from the Transvaal²⁶ and Natal. By 1958, half the student body came from the urban areas²⁷ accounting perhaps for the growing militancy of the student body - urbanised youth being regarded as more politicised than their counterparts from rural schools.²⁸ Most students (with the exception of the small number of female students) came from modest to impoverished backgrounds, even those from the increasingly pressurised traditional ruling elite, gentry and educated middle class. Black students were generally older than their white counterparts, having worked beforehand to earn the requisite tuition and residence fees, fees that were nonetheless lower than those at any other South African university.²⁹

With the exception of those at Fort Hare, the bulk of students at the English-medium universities were middle class. In 1956 approximately twenty seven percent of white students at the University of Natal categorised their fathers as 'manual workers'³⁰ while by 1959 it was estimated that few Wits students came from Johannesburg's working class southern suburbs. As the state subsidised university education by only sixty percent in 1959, tuition fees were high, those at Wits reputed to be the highest in the Commonwealth in 1954.³¹ Residential universities like Rhodes and Pietermaritzburg were out of reach to all but the wealthy. A minority of students owned motorcars. From the mid-1950s there was an acute shortage of parking on campuses like Wits and UCT, indicating that a significant number of students were nonetheless privileged enough to have access to motor vehicles. For those less affluent, the provincial education departments offered bursaries to prospective teachers³² while some students supplemented the cost of their education – estimated at 300 pounds per annum in the mid-1950s³³ - through part-time and holiday employment. NUSAS operated a vacation employment scheme and a loan fund both of which were always over-subscribed. South African universities were dubbed the 'playgrounds of the idle rich'.³⁴ Thus it is safe to assume that the majority of students at the Afrikaans-medium universities were also from middle-class backgrounds though perhaps not as affluent.

The University of Stellenbosch, TUC, GUC and PUCCHE were all regarded as Afrikaans-

²⁶ D. Burchell, 'The emergence and growth of student militancy at the University College of Fort Hare in the 1940s and 1950s', *Journal of the University of Durban- Westville*, New Series 3, 1986, p. 151.

²⁷ H. Burrows *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 24, 50.

²⁸ D. Burchell, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

²⁹ Union of South Africa (UG no. 64), *Department of Education, Arts and Science, Annual Report 1951*, p. 99.

³⁰ T.F. Pettigrew, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

³¹ BC 586 G1, M. O' Dowd, 'Statement on the high proportion of failures amongst first year university students, 11.3.1954'; J. Muller, 'South Africa', P. Altbach (ed), *International higher education: an encyclopaedia*, Garland, New York and London, 1991, p. 418.

³² *SA Student* vol. 10 no. 2, March 1955.

³³ I. Suttner (ed), *Cutting through the mountain: interviews with South African Jewish activists*, Viking Penguin, Johannesburg, 1997, p. 473.

³⁴ *SA Student* vol. 21 no. 1, August 1955.

speaking institutions. PUCCHE was Dutch/Afrikaans-medium from its inception as was Stellenbosch from 1918. TUC and GUC began as essentially English-style institutions, but serving the needs primarily of Afrikaans-speaking students. Yet, beginning in the 1920s both GUC and TUC underwent Afrikanerisation as proponents of the Afrikaans Language Movement fought protracted battles at both institutions for Afrikaans to be used as a medium of instruction. Bilingualism was formally adopted at Pretoria in 1930 and at GUC in 1938. Eventually, Afrikaans became the sole medium of instruction at Pretoria in 1932 and at the University College of the Orange Free State (UCOFS - the former GUC) in 1943.³⁵ Nonetheless, a small but significant number of English-speakers enrolled at Pretoria, the Orange Free State and Stellenbosch – in 1964 they numbered less than nine percent at Pretoria and just over six percent at the UOFS and Stellenbosch.³⁶

The Afrikaans universities could be classified as '*volksuniversiteite*' (peoples/nation universities), institutions with a strong link and commitment to the (Afrikaner) ethnic group and thus Afrikaner nationalism ('*volksnasionisme*').³⁷ PUCCHE, which grew out of the *Gereformeerde Kerk* seminary at Burgersdorp rooted the concept of the *volksuniversiteit* not only in *volksnasionisme* but also in Reformed Calvinism. God created nations and thus the *volksuniversiteit* was commanded by God to serve and protect the identity and unique character of the divinely ordained Afrikaner nation.³⁸ This exclusive Christian Nationalism of PUCCHE – the college had no real conscience clause even though it was publicly funded - ensured that PUCCHE had a different ethos to the other Afrikaans universities and its student body did not always act in concert with those on other Afrikaans campuses. Students at Stellenbosch often behaved at variance to their northern counterparts. Stellenbosch was the cradle of Afrikaner nationalism, but a nationalism which, in the nineteenth century, could conceive of a broader more inclusive definition of 'Afrikaner' that could include English-speakers committed to South Africa.

The Afrikaans universities' concept of the *volksuniversiteit* was diametrically at odds with the generally accepted Western liberal understanding of a university adopted by the English universities, namely: an 'autonomous community of teachers and students dedicated to the search for and service of truth'.³⁹ This had implications for university autonomy and academic freedom. The *volksuniversiteit* was subordinate to the Afrikaner nation and thus to the state whereas the English-medium universities asserted their

³⁵ H.B. Thom (ed.), *Stellenbosch 1866-1966: Honderd jaar hoër onderwys*, Nasionale Boekhandel, Cape Town, 1966, p. 38; G. Viljoen, *op. cit.*, pp. 172, 176-181.

³⁶ G. Viljoen, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

³⁷ J. Degenaar, 'The concept of a *volksuniversiteit*', H. van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 148, 152.

³⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 152, 158-160.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 160.

independence of both. English universities believed in academic freedom: the freedom to choose who to teach, what to teach, how to teach and who would teach. H.B. Thom, the principal of Stellenbosch believed that academic freedom was 'possible only on condition that the university [was] bound to the *volk*'.⁴⁰ Being bound to the nation meant that the university could not threaten it and thus there was no need for interference in its internal affairs.⁴¹ When the government adopted the *volksuniversiteit* as the national model of the university after 1948, it came into conflict with the English universities, their student bodies and NUSAS, regarding university autonomy and academic freedom – a major theme of this study.

Afrikaner nationalism and Fort Hare's membership

The rise of a more exclusive *volksnasionalisme* was a response to the dire socio-economic situation Afrikaners found themselves in during the late 1920s and 30s as well as to a realignment of Afrikaner Nationalist forces during the gold standard crisis which followed the 1929 Wall Street Crash. In the ensuing economic depression, Hertzog's ruling NP was forced into a coalition and finally in 1934 a fusion with Smuts's South African Party (SAP). A small group of Nationalists led by Cape leader, D.F. Malan rejected Fusion and the United Party (UP) which flowed from it, and formed the *Gesuiwerde* (Purified) National Party (GNP). GNP intellectuals recast Afrikaner nationalism by infusing its earlier more secular version with Potchefstroom's Christian Nationalism and nineteenth century 'Krugerism' and the cultural, '*volkisch*' integral nationalism which was giving rise to Nazism in Europe.⁴² Thus it was held that a nation ('*volk*') could only fulfil its God-given calling in complete independence from other nations, and that the individual could only achieve his/her full potential by service to the *volk* and not apart from it.⁴³ This exclusive ethnic nationalism became the driving force behind the emergence of the Afrikaans Economic Movement and the creation of separate Afrikaans cultural and community organisations and trade unions⁴⁴ including student unions.

However, it was NUSAS's relationship with black students which precipitated the rise of an exclusive Afrikaans student movement and marked the failure of broad white South Africanism in the student sphere. By the late 1920s the 'native question' had begun to take precedence over inter-white relations. The promulgation of the segregatory Land Act of

⁴⁰ H.B. Thom, 'Taak en doel van die universiteit: universiteite en akademiese vryheid', S.A. Akademie, *Die taak van die universiteit in Suidelike Afrika* 3, pp. 39-49, cited in J. Degenaar, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

⁴¹ J. Degenaar, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

⁴² C. Marx, *Oxwagon sentinel: radical Afrikaner nationalism and the history of the Ossewabrandwag*, UNISA Press, Pretoria, nd. (originally published in German in 1998), pp. 123-228.

⁴³ D. O' Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: class, capital and ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism, 1934-1948*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1983, pp. 67-72.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 75-76, 96-106.

1913, which stripped Africans of the bulk of their land and by implication their limited franchise in the Cape, led to the formation of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) in 1912. The respectable constitutional protests and lobbying by the largely middle class SANNC for their inclusion in white society was eclipsed in the 1920s by the militant struggles of the urban and rural working class championed by the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) and to a lesser extent the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA). The CPSA was founded in 1921 and in 1928 adopted a policy of a black 'native republic'.⁴⁵ The white electorate reacted in alarm. The 1929 'black peril election' followed a raft of oppressive security and segregatory legislation and an unsuccessful attempt at disenfranchising Cape Africans.⁴⁶ To the consternation of some students in the NUSAS constituency who believed that this marked the onset of imported liberal missionary equality,⁴⁷ a few prominent NUSAS leaders attended a life changing inter-racial youth conference at Fort Hare in June 1930 hosted by the Student Christian Association (SCA).⁴⁸ (The SCA was a multi-racial organisation of students and school children brought to South Africa from the United States by the founder of the Huguenot University College (HUC) in the nineteenth century.⁴⁹) In July 1933 it was suggested that Fort Hare be invited to join NUSAS.⁵⁰ A commission to investigate this found that the black college was constitutionally ineligible for membership because it was affiliated to Rhodes and that general student opinion made its inclusion impracticable,⁵¹ effectively an appeasement to segregation and specifically Afrikaans-speaking students.

In August 1933 GUC seceded from NUSAS on the grounds that the national union was too 'negrophilistic' in that it followed 'a negative native policy' with regard to admitting Fort Hare. It was also argued that NUSAS was 'unafrikaans', in that English-speaking members wished to couple South Africa to Britain. Moreover, it had a 'liberalistic tendency' which was the 'result of the strong influence of socialistic, international-minded Jews ... who wish to effect a general world citizenship, without founding it on genuine nationalism'.⁵² The reasons for Potchefstroom's secession later that year were similar but more explicitly anti-

⁴⁵ T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1983, pp. 1-9.

⁴⁶ T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history*, MacMillan, Houndsmill and London, 1991, pp. 265-270.

⁴⁷ P. van der Schyff, *Wonderdaad! die PUK tot 1951: wording, vestiging en selfstandigheid*, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, Potchefstroom, 2003, p. 536.

⁴⁸ L. Chisholm, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-66; H.B. Thom (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 356; P. van de Schyff, *op. cit.*, pp. 535-536.

⁴⁹ Separate branches existed for different racial groups, but whites remained in one organisation in spite of attempts by Afrikaans-speaking students to secede and form their own organisation between 1915 and 1917. The SCA had 23 000 members at schools and institutions of higher education in 1940. J. de V. Heese, *Die Voortrekkers en ander Suid-Afrikaanse jeugverenigings*, Nasionale Pers, Cape Town, 1940, pp. 123-132.

⁵⁰ BC 586 B1 Council Minutes 1933, pp. 8-9; N. Rubin, *History of the relations between NUSAS, the Afrikaanse Studentebond and the Afrikaans university centres*, NUSAS, Cape Town, 1960, p. 4.

⁵¹ BC 586 S23, P. Tobias, 'A history of the relations between NUSAS and the Afrikaans universities 1924-1948'; N. Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁵² *Die Volksblad*, 22.8.1933 cited in N. Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Semitic and overtly nationalistic.⁵³ Pretoria left shortly after the others. In September 1933, a month after GUC had left NUSAS, the *Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond* (ANS) was 'hastily' launched in Bloemfontein.⁵⁴ Its founders were Piet Meyer, the chief protagonist of GUC's disaffiliation from NUSAS⁵⁵ and Nico Diederichs, a former NUSAS executive member.⁵⁶ While studying abroad, both had assimilated the Neofichtean political philosophy of Northern Europe⁵⁷ while in addition, Diederichs had cultivated strong ties with the ultra-nationalist European student organisation, the *Dietsche Orde*,⁵⁸ the inspiration for the ANS.⁵⁹ The ANS was an extreme nationalist organisation based on Christian National principles⁶⁰ which became increasingly pro-Nazi, even accepting an invitation to attend the congress of the German Nazi Party in 1938.⁶¹ The ANS was later absorbed into the *Ossewabrandwag* (OB), a para-military organisation established in 1937 which also had ties to the Third Reich and was intent on setting-up a republican, national-socialist Afrikaans state.⁶² The ANS newspaper, *Die Wapenskou*, was at the forefront of developing and disseminating Christian Nationalism.⁶³ The student bodies of the three northern Afrikaans universities as well as those from the Afrikaans teacher training colleges (Normal Colleges) joined this student union⁶⁴ and by 1938 had the support of forty eight percent of all Afrikaans-speaking students.⁶⁵

Stellenbosch remained in NUSAS and called on the disaffiliated centres to return to the national union and discuss their grievances - grievances with which Stellenbosch identified too. Accordingly, in late 1933 Stellenbosch negotiated on behalf of the northern universities that NUSAS would *inter alia* become fully bilingual and that ANS would be recognised as a cultural and religious organisation complementing the work done by NUSAS. No unanimity could be reached however, on the requirement that no black students would be admitted to

⁵³ N. Rubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-7.

⁵⁴ P. Furlong, *The crown and the swastika: the impact of the radical right on the Afrikaner Nationalist movement in the fascist era*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1991, p. 79; P. van der Schyff, *op. cit.*, p. 538.

⁵⁵ J. Fick, 'Afrikaner student politics – past and present', H. van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds), *Student perspectives on South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1972, pp. 65-66.

⁵⁶ L. Chisholm, *op. cit.*, p. 30; *Die Banier*, September 1932.

⁵⁷ P. Furlong, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁵⁸ *Die Banier* vol. 1 no. 2, April 1933.

⁵⁹ *Die Wapenskou* vol. 1 no. 9, November 1934.

⁶⁰ The constitution of the ANS stated that the organisation was based on Protestant Christian and national cultural principles and recognised the leadership of God in the area of culture and all aspects of life. It aimed to develop an Afrikaans student spirit and character for the service of the nation. Further, it intended to cultivate ties between South African students and their overseas counterparts who had the same national and cultural aims and interests. Constitution of the ANS in *Die Wapenskou* vol. 1 no. 1, 28.3.1934.

⁶¹ C. Marx, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-172.

⁶² It had a membership of 170 000 in 1940. B.J. Vorster (later prime minister), Nico Diederichs (later state president), Hendrik van den Bergh (later head of the Bureau of State Security), Piet Meyer (later chairman of the *Broederbond* and the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and Koot Vorster (later Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church) were all prominent members of the OB. P. Furlong, *op. cit.*, pp. 169, 247-248.

⁶³ D. O' Meara, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

⁶⁴ P. Furlong, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

⁶⁵ C. Marx, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

membership.⁶⁶ These, and attempted negotiations by NUSAS with ANS regarding dual membership, failed⁶⁷ and in 1936 Stellenbosch disaffiliated from NUSAS and joined ANS.⁶⁸

By 1936 then, two distinct student organisations had emerged, one stridently Afrikaner nationalist, the other, still clinging to its inclusiveness and goal of cultivating a broad white South Africanism, but consisting by default only of students enrolled at English-speaking universities. Within NUSAS tensions existed between those advocating rapprochement with the Afrikaans centres, and those liberals and radicals - particularly at Wits - who felt that NUSAS should abandon segregation, become truly inclusive and admit Fort Hare and other black students to membership.⁶⁹

The divisive issue of Fort Hare's affiliation was shelved during the Second World War.⁷⁰ The UP's decision to enter the War on the side of Great Britain and the Allies and the subsequent departure of J.B.M. Hertzog from the party, dealt a blow to the ideal of a broad white South Africanism symbolised by Fusion. It posed a dilemma for NUSAS. By supporting the Allied struggle for democracy and freedom, ideals that were also enshrined in the NUSAS constitution, NUSAS would both jeopardise its non-political position as well as destroy all hopes of a re-united white national student union. In 1940 NUSAS made its first foray into 'party politics' and adopted, far from unanimously,⁷¹ an anti-fascist 'War motion' which endorsed all UP War policy, including controversially, black mobilisation and the neutralisation of pro-Nazi groupings within South Africa.⁷² The War contributed to the political polarisation of student affairs at the linguistically mixed Wits and UCT. This had consequences for NUSAS too: both the pro-War *UC Tattle* and the anti-War/pro-Axis *Die Spantou* were suppressed by the UCT authorities and SRC for jeopardising the War effort and generating 'racial hatred'.⁷³ The enlistment of a sizeable number of mainly English-speaking UCT students⁷⁴ - presumably UP supporters - led to a shift in the balance of power in campus politics. Arguing that NUSAS was 'unafrikaans' and 'political' in supporting the War, the substantially augmented NP and ANS contingent on the UCT SRC

⁶⁶ BC 586 B1 'Minutes of Council Meeting held at Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, 15 December 1933', pp. 4-6; N. Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 8; H.B. Thom (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 357.

⁶⁷ BC 586 B1 'President se Verslag aan die Elfde Jaarlikse Raadsveradering 1935', pp. 1-2; Council Minutes 1935, p. 6; *Die Wapenskou* vol. 2 no. 8, October 1935; B. Murray, *Wits – the early years*, p. 342.

⁶⁸ J. Duffy, *The politics of ethnic nationalism: Afrikaner unity, the National Party, and the radical right in Stellenbosch, 1934-1948*, Routledge, New York and London, 2006, p. 101.

⁶⁹ B. Murray, *Wits – the early years*, *op. cit.*, p. 342. See for example BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1936, p. 1; Council Minutes 1936, pp. 4-5; 1939, pp. 12-13; 1940, pp. 38-39 for details of the attempts by Wits to include Fort Hare and coloured students and in addition, their efforts to create a separate black union.

⁷⁰ B. Murray, *Wits the 'open' years*, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, pp. 18-19, 86; BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1940, p. 1.

⁷² *Star*, 4.7.1940.

⁷³ *UC Tattle*, 8.10.1941; H. Phillips, *op. cit.*, pp. 231-232.

⁷⁴ H. Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

succeeded in abolishing UCT's automatic membership of the national union.⁷⁵ A statement allegedly made at a Wits mass meeting in June 1941 in support of Fort Hare being invited to join NUSAS, that Wits would 'rather co-operate with a hundred natives than with a thousand Afrikaners'⁷⁶ was the pretext for the unofficial one hundred and twenty-strong Wits ANS branch's decision to embark on an anti-Semitic, racist, and eventually successful campaign to persuade Afrikaans universities to sever all ties with Wits students.⁷⁷ The exclusion of Fort Hare led to the virtual extinction of NUSAS at Wits. In 1943 a rival, but overtly political national union, the Federation of Progressive Students (FOPS) was established by Wits students to champion the creation of a democratic and non-racial society and secure Fort Hare's entry to NUSAS.⁷⁸ However, FOPS was refused recognition at UCT⁷⁹ but won control of the Wits SRC in 1944, a position it retained for a number of years.⁸⁰

The structure and functioning of NUSAS after the Second World War

In order to elaborate further, it is necessary to examine the political views held by students at NUSAS universities as well as the structure and functioning of the national union. During the Second World War, NUSAS was in theory a federation of the SRCs of all the English-medium universities as well as the Afrikaans-medium HUC. In practice however, because of its indecisive policy on segregation, NUSAS came to be divorced from the SRCs and power resided in individuals and members of campus NUSAS branches. Largely because of the shelving of the divisive Fort Hare issue, a thriving three hundred and fifty-strong NUSAS branch operated at UCOFS throughout the War, though not on the other ANS-affiliated campuses where NUSAS was proscribed.⁸¹ Partly to mitigate the effects of the ANS's recruitment of the Afrikaans Normal Colleges and its indoctrination of teachers and school children with Christian National Education (CNE), NUSAS invited the English-medium teacher training colleges to affiliate in 1936.⁸² Each affiliated SRC paid membership fees to NUSAS based on the number of students registered at their university. Thus all registered students at a NUSAS-affiliated centre automatically became members

⁷⁵ *UC Tattle* vol. 7 no. 1, 4.10.1940; *Die Spantou*, 28.8.1940.

⁷⁶ Translation of 'liewer met 'n honderd naturelle sal saamwerk as met 'n duisend Afrikaners'.

⁷⁷ BC 586 O6.1, na., (R. Welsh?), 'Copy of Address to General Meeting 20.6.1941', pp. 1-2; 'SRC Wits, Motion' nd. (1941?); 'The SRC President's Report to the General Meeting of the Students 20.8.1941 held in the Great Hall at 5pm'; B. Murray, *Wits the 'open' years*, p. 102; *Wus Views* vol. 7 no. 5, 13.8.1943.

⁷⁸ B. Murray, 'The "Democratic" Left at Wits 1943-1948: the Federation of Progressive Students and student politics', *Democracy, Popular Precedents, Practice and Culture*, University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop, 1994, pp. 1, 3; S. Forman, *Lionel Forman a life too short- a personal memoir by Sadie Forman*, University of Fort Hare Press, Alice, 2008, pp. 78-80.

⁷⁹ *Varsity*, 14.10.1944.

⁸⁰ *Wus Views*, 13.3.1945; B. Murray, *Wits the 'open' years*, pp. 100-102.

⁸¹ The authorities at UCOFS gave the ANS and NUSAS equal recognition, thus forcing a reluctant SRC to allow NUSAS to organise. BC 586 B1 Council Minutes 1940, p. 8; 1945, pp. 1-4; Interview with Phillip Tobias, 4.12.1997; *Wus Views* vol. 7 no. 5, 13.8.1943; *Irawa*, May 1945; *SA Student*, 15.3.1945.

⁸² BC 586 B1 Council Minutes 1936, p. 5. *Die Wapenskou* vol. 3 no. 3, May 1936.

of the national union whether they wanted to or not. Branches like those at UCOFS paid membership fees only for those students who had voluntarily joined them. Thus the bulk of NUSAS's membership fees were derived from the large centres of Wits and UCT.

NUSAS convened an annual council, later renamed a 'student assembly', where representatives of the affiliated SRCs and local branches made policy for the national union, policy which remained 'non-political' and limited to student and educational matters – a 'students-as-such' orientation. The council elected an executive, headed by a president, the executive and president being responsible for carrying out NUSAS policy. Until the late 1950s, the presidency was an unpaid, part-time office, usually occupied by a leading student at Wits or UCT. The day-to-day administration of NUSAS was in the hands of a paid General Secretary based at the NUSAS head office in Cape Town. Contact between the scattered executive members, the head office and SRCs, was through written correspondence.

NUSAS was also a student trade union providing welfare services for its membership through its Student Relief Department. Thus it operated an Employment Bureau, which sourced part-time and vacation jobs for students, a Supply Association which sold textbooks at discounted rates and a facility for the printing of lecture notes and examination papers.⁸³ More benefits were introduced after the War. These included the Loan Fund which offered interest-free loans to students,⁸⁴ mostly black by the 1960s, a discount scheme arranged with various commercial undertakings patronised by students, a baby-sitting scheme offering student employment, and even a facility for acquiring short and long term insurance.⁸⁵ The Travel Department offered quality overseas tours to students, though only the very affluent could afford these.⁸⁶ The capital reserves accumulated from these tremendously popular ventures allowed NUSAS to survive the Second World War financially intact even though with the disruption of shipping the tours ceased. During the 1950s, the Travel Department expanded its offerings and co-ordinated the issuing of the International Student Card. In 1972 the Travel Department was incorporated as the not-for-profit South African Students' Travel Service.⁸⁷

A Department of Social Research conducted studies into national issues such as white

⁸³ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1938, p. 1; Council Minutes 1939, p. 3.

⁸⁴ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1953, p. 41.

⁸⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 10 no. 11, 21.8.1958.

⁸⁶ The cost of a three-month European tour in 1952 was 300 pounds, the same amount estimated to be the cost of a year's university tuition and accommodation in the mid-1950s. *Dome* vol. 7 no. 5, 9.9.1953; BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1950, p. 45; *SA Student* vol. 16 no. 3, October 1952. In 1970 it was R1100 while a budget tour was R650. BC 586 B4.1, Horst Kleinschmidt to Directors of Travel and National Executive, 15.4.1970. UCT tuition fees in 1983 were approximately R1100.

⁸⁷ <http://www.sasts.org.za> accessed 13.2.2014.

poverty,⁸⁸ the Transkei,⁸⁹ and the origins of segregation in South Africa.⁹⁰ On the campuses this research, as well as more parochial projects aimed at identifying and ameliorating social problems⁹¹ (in the manner of the liberal SAIRR), was undertaken by the newly created Local Committees, the 'nuts and bolts' of NUSAS.⁹² In addition, the Local Committees administered NUSAS student welfare projects, undertook fundraising, organised lectures, and linked up with external welfare organisations such as the Adult Night School Movement,⁹³ the South African National Tuberculosis Association and in the 1960s, the Kupugani feeding scheme and the South African Blood Service. Local Committees, to which students joined voluntarily, became the training grounds of the new generation of student leaders, both of NUSAS and the SRCs. They were the most 'political' structures in NUSAS and were frequently out of touch with current student opinion. On occasion they became the home of a particular political grouping or a battleground for competing political ideologies and sometimes challenged the hegemony of the democratically elected SRCs on the campuses and in NUSAS forums.⁹⁴

The ideological orientation of students at the NUSAS-affiliated universities

Few studies have been conducted into students' political attitudes and thus it is difficult to gauge the political allegiances of the student bodies at the NUSAS universities. Based on the understanding that most white students were middle-class, most were English-speaking and at Wits, UCT and Durban, most were day students, it can be assumed that until the early 1960s, most white Wits, UCT and Durban students supported the UP, the party which held the middle class urban constituencies from which most of them came. In 1956 less than twelve percent⁹⁵ of white Natal undergraduate students supported the NP,

⁸⁸ *Die Wapenskou* vol. 2 no. 7, September 1935; B. Murray, *Wits – the early years, op. cit.*, p. 343.

⁸⁹ This was an ambitious field project led by Wits students, Philip Tobias, the renowned Wits paleoanthropologist and Sidney Brenner, the Nobel laureate in genetics. It was still cited in scholarly texts many decades later. See for example C. Bundy, 'Land and liberation: popular rural protest and the national liberation movements in South Africa 1920-1960', S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth century South Africa*, Longman, London, 1987, pp. 269, 283.

⁹⁰ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1953, p. 126. The directors of this project, Lionel Forman and Harold Wolpe devoted much of their later life to this subject. Both were members of the CPSA. Forman was to undertake one of the first Marxist revisions of South African history, curtailed by his early death while Wolpe was to link capitalism, segregation and influx control.

⁹¹ Local district surveys included those of Cato Manor, Sophiatown, Booth Road Township in Natal, Windermere and Eersterus. *SA Student* vol. 14 no. 4, October 1950; *Cape Times*, 13.7.1950; 11.7.1952. More specific projects included investigations into African transport and eating house facilities in the Transvaal, Transvaal mission hospitals, black sports facilities in the Cape Peninsula, the cost of living, employment opportunities for engineering graduates and university finances. BC 586 B1 Report on the Department of Research and Studies, 1948, pp. 9-10; *Cape Times*, 21.5.1951; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 2 no. 9, 24.8.1950; vol. 4 no. 1, 11.3.1952.

⁹² Interview with John Didcott, 18.11.1997.

⁹³ *Wus Views* vol. 6 no. 4, 15.6.1942; no. 6, 13.10.1942; *Wus Views* vol. 1 no. 1, March 1947; *Varsity* vol. 4 no. 3, 8.5.1945; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 3 no. 6, 29.8.1951; D. Wilson, 'The African Adult Education Movement in the Western Cape from 1945 to 1967 in the context of its socio-economic and political background', MPhil dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1988, pp. 83, 85, 105-106, 108-109.

⁹⁴ B. Murray, *Wits – the early years, op. cit.*, p. 343.

⁹⁵ The actual figures were 72 students out of a student body of 627. T.F. Pettigrew, *op. cit.*, pp. 31, 34.

but nonetheless the bulk of the student body upheld white supremacist ideas similar to those of the NP, believing for example that Africans were inherently 'primitive' and 'uncivilised' and thus suited to manual labour rather than skilled, responsible work.⁹⁶ Presumably then, Natal students were UP adherents and assuming that many of them came from Natal, a significant number probably identified with the Natal separatist and communal segregationist ideas of Heaton Nichols who left the Natal UP to form the Union Federal Party (UFP) in 1953.

The residential universities of Pietermaritzburg and Rhodes attracted students from the Witwatersrand as well as a significant minority from Northern and Southern Rhodesia,⁹⁷ the white inhabitants of the latter being known for their strongly segregationist views. Many Rhodes students came from nearby Port Elizabeth, its middle class suburbs the domain of the UP until the 1970s. Albany, the constituency in which Grahamstown was located, was a UP stronghold. Some Rhodes students voted there, thus suggesting they were UP.⁹⁸ Legassick has suggested that Rhodes students were liberal conservatives.

The affluent urban constituencies of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand frequently returned candidates aligned to the liberal left wing of the UP which in the late 1940s was represented by the deputy prime-minister, J.H. Hofmeyr. In 1953 and 1959, a liberal minority split from the UP to join the newly formed Liberal Party (LP) and Progressive Party (PP) respectively, both of which at their foundation endorsed a common society and a qualified non-racial franchise. This will be discussed in more detail during the course of the study. A significant number of NUSAS activists supported the ever radicalising LP and by 1966, the NUSAS president estimated that of the thirty percent of politically aware students at the NUSAS-affiliated universities, the vast majority were adherents of the PP. The apathetic 'non/a-political' complement supported the UP or NP, though not out of ideological commitment but rather because of lack of exposure to a rationally argued alternative viewpoint and the political indoctrination stemming from 'Current Affairs' type programmes⁹⁹ (the voice of the NP) aired by the state-controlled South African

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Half of the members of the 1963 Rhodes SRC came from Northern or Southern Rhodesia. *Rhodeo* vol. 17 no. 20, 19.9.1963. In 1967, the Pietermaritzburg SRC estimated that half its student body was from Rhodesia. BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1967, p. 70.

⁹⁸ Sean Greyling argued that the student vote was very important in securing the victory of the Progressive Reform Party in the Albany constituency in 1981. S. Greyling, 'Rhodes University during the segregation and apartheid eras, 1933-1990', MA dissertation, Rhodes University, 2007, pp. 132, 138. Thus it could be argued that after the enfranchisement of eighteen year olds in 1957, the student vote was important in university towns and the results to some degree reflect student preferences.

⁹⁹ BC 586 F4, John Daniel, 'The political attitudes of South African students', 6.12.1966, pp. 1- 3. A 1962 survey of the political attitudes of schoolboys at St Andrew's, Grahamstown and Michaelhouse in the Natal Midlands made similar findings. Schoolboy political affiliations were divided between the PP and NP while those few supporting the UP did so only because their fathers strongly identified with the party. Many of these

Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) on the English radio service. The politically conscientised liberal and the non-political/apathetic/NP/UP dichotomy is reinforced when it is realised that large mass meetings, marches and demonstrations at Wits and UCT during the 1950s and 1960s drew a maximum of forty percent of the student body and could be relied on to deliver a liberal vote.

Branches of political parties and overtly political organisations were banned on all campuses¹⁰⁰ but nonetheless operated unofficially at, for example, Wits and UCT. At Rhodes,¹⁰¹ Pietermaritzburg, and Durban, as well as at the teacher training colleges, elections to the SRCs were not on a political basis, most offices being filled by representatives of the faculties and residences. Without pre-secured mandates, this made it difficult for these SRCs to represent the viewpoints of their student bodies in the NUSAS assembly where increasingly complex political and ethical issues were debated and stands taken. More often than not, delegates presented their own personal views sometimes with serious repercussions for themselves subsequently with their student bodies. At UCT and Wits, ideological groupings put up slates of candidates for election and by means of 'schlentering' (lobbying in a manner perceived to be underhand) hoped to ensure the adoption of their policies by student government. Election manifestoes were published in the student press and aspirant SRC candidates faced the student constituency at specially convened electoral mass meetings. By the 1960s, some candidates spent large sums on their electoral campaigns.¹⁰²

In most years on all campuses, at least one ideologically committed Nationalist sat on the SRC. Thriving Afrikaans student societies existed at Wits, UCT¹⁰³ and Rhodes, though the latter's was small. The Wits *Afrikaanse Studenteklub* became a vehicle for NP mobilisation from the late 1950s onwards (discussed during the course of this study) but during the late 1940s and early 1950s, many Afrikaans-speaking students at Wits were believed to be neither 'conscious of the struggle of the Afrikaner'¹⁰⁴ nor members or regular attenders of the Afrikaans churches¹⁰⁵ leading, for example, in 1951 to the closure of the campus

respondents would be university students in 1966. B. Streek, 'White schoolboys and politics', *New African* vol. 3 no. 6, 8.6.1963.

¹⁰⁰ *Guardian*, 19.5.1947; *Varsity* vol. 6 no. 6, 19.5.1947.

¹⁰¹ *Rhodeo* vol. 1 no. 10, 7.10.1948; 9.6.1951. In 1963 political campaigning for SRC elections was still prohibited but for the first time, prospective SRC members were permitted to publicise and publish their election manifestoes. *Rhodeo* vol. 17 no. 11, 6.6.1963; no. 12, 1.8.1963.

¹⁰² See copies of *Witwatersrand Student* for August – October 1965.

¹⁰³ *Varsity* vol. 16 no. 29, 3.10.1958; *Day Student*, 16.6.1961.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from S.J. Zietsman to the Librarian of the South African Library, Cape Town, 8.2.1952, inserted in the back of *Die Spore* volume 1945-1949 housed in the South African Library, Cape Town.

¹⁰⁵ 'Report of the Youth Worker of the Nederduits Hervormde or Gereformeerde Church at the University of the Witwatersrand to the Synod of the Church' cited in *Die Spoorslag* vol. 1 no. 3, June 1951.

branch of the *Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuur Vereeniging* for lack of student interest.¹⁰⁶ The Afrikaans student associations at UCT and Rhodes were largely non-political social clubs, hosting concerts, day trips and 'volkspele' (traditional dancing),¹⁰⁷ and were led on occasion by liberals. For example, the Rhodes 1957 chairperson was Jan Breitenbach who, as headmaster of St Johns College, Johannesburg, opened the school to all races and abolished cadets¹⁰⁸ while the 1964 chair was Johan Maree, later a Marxist sociologist with ties to the progressive trade union movement. A poll conducted at UCT in 1958 revealed that most campus Afrikaans-speakers were not in favour of the removal of black students from the university,¹⁰⁹ official government policy, suggesting that like those at Wits a decade earlier, they were either NP dissidents or UP-aligned.

A small but politically more powerful group than committed Nationalists was the diverse radical socialist left. With the entry of the Soviet Union into the Second World War, the Comintern-aligned CPSA threw itself enthusiastically into the Allied war effort winning for itself for a time a hitherto unknown respectability in South Africa. Some student members and adherents of the CPSA were attracted less to the doctrinaire Soviet communism of the party but more to its non-racialism and political equality – unique in South African politics.

The Trotskyite left was committed to permanent revolution and was anti-Stalinist. It was composed of *inter alia*, the predominantly coloured Anti-CAD, the Progressive Forum, various 'Fellowship' societies and after it fissured in the late 1930s, the rump of the All African Convention, the latter an African united front formed in 1935 to oppose the Native Trust and Land Act which disenfranchised Cape African voters in 1936. In 1939 these various Trotskyite groupings united to form the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM). NEUM opposed any collaboration with ruling class, implicitly white structures, including the SRC and NUSAS, thus relegating NEUM adherents to the role of armchair intellectuals rather than political activists. Exceptions to this passive/non-collaborationist rule occurred after NEUM split in 1958, some members of Anti-CAD, the Fellowships and the Witwatersrand branch of the AAC affiliate, the Society of Young Africa (SOYA), demanding a greater commitment to socialism, non-racial organisational structures and substantial white participation.¹¹⁰ Between 1958 and late 1960 a number of NEUM adherents served on the UCT and Wits SRCs, pushing these bodies to the left. Both campuses witnessed the establishment of non-racial, NEUM-leaning but largely non-partisan Student Fellowship

¹⁰⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 3 no. 5, 25.6.1951.

¹⁰⁷ *Varsity* vol. 16 no. 29, 3.10.1958.

¹⁰⁸ 'The St John's College History', <http://www.stjohnscollege.co.za/overviewHistory.php> accessed 4.2.2014.

¹⁰⁹ *Argus*, 14.8.1958; Honi Soit to *Argus*, 21.8.1958.

¹¹⁰ Joe Rassool, 'Notes on the history of the Non-European Unity Movement in South Africa and the role of Hosea Jaffe', <http://www.marxist.org/history/etol/revhist/supplem/rassool.html> accessed 26.8.2009; *Soyan*, February 1959, pp. 1-25, <http://www.disa@ukzn.ac.za> accessed 2.10.2014.

Societies.¹¹¹

To the radical left could be added various independent Marxists as well as democratic socialists and social democrats, the latter two who accepted a constitutional route to socialism. Formative influences on the radical left included Zionist socialist youth groups like *Hashomair Hatzair*, family backgrounds rooted in trade unionism and the white Labour Party, the Indian Congresses (established initially in 1894 by Mahatma Gandhi to oppose trading restrictions on Indians), the Springbok Legion (a radical ex-servicemen's 'trade union' which had a branch at Wits¹¹²) and even the Catholic Church.

Socialists were organised into various campus societies. A student branch of the CPSA¹¹³ competed with its anti-Stalinist rival, the Progressive Forum (with which NUSAS stalwarts Philip Tobias and Sydney Brenner sympathised¹¹⁴) for the loyalty of the Wits radical left.¹¹⁵ However, the major socialist organisation at Wits during the Second World War was the Students' Labour League (SLL), initially affiliated to the white Labour Party. The SLL put up a candidate in the Johannesburg municipal elections. Following its banning on the Wits campus, the SLL was replaced by FOPS.¹¹⁶ FOPS at Wits and UCT was not sectarian and was composed of an ideologically diverse group of radicals, as was the Diogenes Society at the Wits Medical School and UCT's (unofficial?) Student Socialist Party.¹¹⁷

UCT's long-standing Modern World Society, in existence since at least 1940¹¹⁸ and still extant in the mid-1960s was an uneasy mix of CPSA adherents, Trotskyites and other Marxists. Moreover, it had close ties to the Modern Youth Society which in turn had links to the ANC's youth wing, the Youth League (ANCYL),¹¹⁹ established in 1944. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, almost the entire executive of the Transvaal ANCYL was studying at Wits. Reflecting the organisation's ideological characteristics, Wits Youth Leaguers, including Law student, Nelson Mandela, were African nationalist and anti-communist and

¹¹¹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 11, 26.6.1959; B. Hirson, *Revolutions in my life*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1995, p. 270.

¹¹² *Wus Views* vol. 9 no. 2, 11.4.1945; *Special Rag Edition*, 10.5.1946; Interview with Phillip Tobias, 4.12.1997; *Nux* no. 7, 10.9.1945. Radical UCT students were arrested for their participation in the Legion's 'sticker campaign' – pasting gummed labels bearing a bayonet and swastika on NP election posters during the 1948 election campaign. S. Forman, *Lionel Forman: a life too short - a personal memoir by Sadie Forman*, University of Fort Hare Press, Alice, 2008, pp. 102-104.

¹¹³ S. Forman, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

¹¹⁴ Joe Rassool, 'Notes on the history of the Non-European Unity Movement in South Africa and the role of Hosea Jaffe', <http://www.marxist.org/history/etol/revhist/supplem/rassool.html> accessed 26.8.2009.

¹¹⁵ 'Progressive Forum', Document 64, A. Drew (ed), *South Africa's radical tradition, a documentary history, 1943-1964*, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/alison-drew/1950-documents64.htm> accessed 26.8.2009.

¹¹⁶ B. Murray, *Wits – the 'open' years*, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-98.

¹¹⁷ S. Forman, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-82.

¹¹⁸ *UC Tattle*, 23.8.1940.

¹¹⁹ S. Forman, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-72; I. Suttner, *op. cit.*, pp. 354-355; R. Segal, *Into exile*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1963, p. 91.

suspicious of the white left in general.¹²⁰ Nonetheless, some Youth Leaguers like Diliza Mji and Peter Tsele served on the Wits SRC¹²¹ with well-known CPSA adherents such as Joe Slovo and Harold Wolpe and with them participated in the NUSAS assembly deliberations.

During the 1940s, the political allegiances of Fort Hare students were divided unequally between the nationally weak ANC and the more prominent All African Convention (AAC). Eddie Roux, the botanist, visited Fort Hare to recruit members to the CPSA in 1933. Whether he succeeded to do so is unclear – students did read the CPSA magazine *Indlela Yenkululeko* - but his visit led to an official ban on political discussion on the campus.¹²² Nonetheless, student life at Fort Hare was deeply political. Political debate was the 'favourite pastime', the 'main game'.¹²³ Moreover, seemingly non-political issues such as how students viewed the future,¹²⁴ the quality of food, compulsory attendance at church services or rules imposed by the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian ministers who administered the university residences in a somewhat rigid fashion could provoke student mobilisation.¹²⁵

Radical left wing societies were seemingly absent at Rhodes and Natal, though radical students did at times make their presence felt there. A radical grouping of students from UNNE and Durban were sometimes gathered together by Durban Psychology lecturer, Kurt Danziger (a member of the Communist Party) during the mid-1950s, if only to establish their suitability for recruitment to the Communist Party.¹²⁶ Many UNNE students were deeply politicised and were aligned to the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), the ANC¹²⁷ and the NEUM. While waiting for their late afternoon/evening classes to commence, they spent their time arguing about philosophy, socialism and communism. The UNNE student newspaper, *Student Call* (edited in the mid-1950s by Mac Maharaj, a communist member of the NIC and later a member of the ANC's armed wing and presidential advisor to Jacob

¹²⁰ B. Murray, *Wits – the 'open' years*, op. cit., p. 99.

¹²¹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1951, p. 20; S. Forman, op. cit., p. 129.

¹²² E. Roux, *Time longer than rope: a history of the black mans' struggle for freedom in South Africa*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1964, p. 276; R. First, 'Preface', G. Mbeki, *South Africa: the peasants' revolt*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1964, p. 12.

¹²³ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', Unpublished memoir, p. 4.

¹²⁴ A 1962 survey of how Fort Hare and white Natal students viewed the future revealed that white students were concerned about their careers, happiness and security while black students were totally absorbed in politics and apartheid. White students disliked dishonesty while black students disliked Nazis. White students regarded cultural icons as heroes whereas for black students these were political figures. L. Bloom, 'How our students face the future', *New African* vol. 2 no. 2, 20.2.1963.

¹²⁵ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of Fort Hare mass meetings', 21.5.1952; 23.3.1955; T. Beard, 'Background to student activities at the University College of Fort Hare', H. van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds), *Student perspectives on South Africa*, op. cit., p. 165; Fort Hare, *Report of the Fort Hare Commission July 1955*, Lovedale Press, Alice, nd., c. 1955, p. 3; T. White, 'Student disturbances at Fort Hare in 1955', *Kleio* no. 29, 1997, p. 131.

¹²⁶ P. O' Malley, *Shades of difference: Mac Maharaj and the struggle for South Africa*, Viking, 2007, p. 72.

¹²⁷ P. O' Malley interview with Nandha (Steve) Naidoo, 28.11.2003,

<http://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/031v03445/041v03833/051v03910.htm> accessed 25.3.2014.

Zuma) was banned by the Natal University authorities because of its confrontational tone and was thus brought out clandestinely.¹²⁸

The white campuses of Durban and Pietermaritzburg had peculiarities which led to the existence of distinctly conservative pockets of students. Pietermaritzburg's Faculty of Agriculture had a dual system of control whereby staff members were both university employees and bilingual civil servants answerable to the state.¹²⁹ Many were Afrikaner Nationalists, some of whom were members of the *Broederbond*, a secret Afrikaans male organisation established in 1918 to champion Afrikaner language, culture and economic interests which was intimately entwined with the NP. This institutional conservatism added to the conservativeness of agriculture students, many of whom hailed from rural farming communities in South Africa and across the Limpopo (forty percent from the 'Rhodesias').¹³⁰ Many would become farmers themselves or enter the civil service as agricultural officers. Agricultural students ('agrics') were a powerful presence at Pietermaritzburg. Known for their drinking, rugby and rowdiness, the 'farmer's song' was the 'anthem' of Pietermaritzburg sung at inter-university sports events. Agrics were not interested in the 'political issues of the day', 'accepted the prevailing paternalistic attitudes regarding race relations' and were generally anti-NP.¹³¹ During some years agriculture students stirred from their apathy and awoke to their political strength and took control of the SRC, pushing it in a more conservative, less 'political' direction.

Relative to other faculties in the university and to other universities, Durban had a preponderance of commerce and engineering students, students known for their conservative bent,¹³² presumably because they dealt with numbers and inanimate objects rather than people as in the humanities and medicine. Unlike at Wits, where engineers were a vocal and disruptive force at mass meetings,¹³³ but generally eschewed organised student politics, 'engineers were the main drivers of political life on the Durban campus'.¹³⁴ 'We are the engineers from varsity' was the anthem of Durban.¹³⁵ Adding to the conservativeness of Durban was the existence of a very powerful Accountancy Society

¹²⁸ P. O' Malley, *Shades of difference*, *op. cit.*, pp. 65, 67, 68.

¹²⁹ E. Brookes, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-98; B. Guest, *A fine band of farmers are we! A history of Agricultural Studies in Pietermaritzburg*, Natal Society Foundation, Pietermaritzburg, 2010, pp. 13, 55-60, <http://www.natalia.org.za?Files?Publications?WR%20Guest%20Are%20%We%2010%20complete%20with%20cover.pdf> accessed 10.11.2014.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 55.

¹³¹ *ibid.*, pp. 51-53.

¹³² P. Altbach, 'Perspectives on student political activism', P. Altbach (ed), *Student political activism – an international reference handbook*, Greenwood Press, New York, Westport and London, 1989, p. 9; S. Forman, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

¹³³ R. Heard and K. Kirsch, editorial in *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 10 no. 9, 17.6.1958.

¹³⁴ Rory Short via email, 14.12.2014.

¹³⁵ B. Guest, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

during the 1950s and 1960s.¹³⁶ Many accounting students were part-timers holding down full-time jobs. They were often older and had more responsibilities and were probably less affluent than the average student, making it likely that they had outgrown or could not afford the youthful idealism which drove much left wing student activism.

Rhodes opened a Faculty of Divinity in the 1950s. This lent a new character to the campus. During the 1960s divinity students played a prominent role in student life, also in campus politics, where they were often liberal left.¹³⁷ The Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand were liberal in the sense that they upheld a conscience clause and did not subscribe to any religious beliefs. Official university functions were devoid of religious trappings and students were not asked their religious affiliations on their application forms.¹³⁸ Wits established a Divinity Faculty in 1962 but it was only in 1967 that UCT introduced any faith studies, and even then, these took the form of comparative religion¹³⁹ rather than the theology of any specific faith. Nonetheless, like at the other universities, religion played an important role in many students' lives.

Student Jewish Associations (SJA) existed on all the English-medium white campuses as well as at Stellenbosch.¹⁴⁰ Their affiliation to the cautious South African Union of Jewish and Zionist Students tempered the liberalism and radicalism of much of the SJAs' membership. Large branches of the evangelical ecumenical SCA existed on all university campuses. Though it preached a social gospel¹⁴¹ and ecumenicism tends to tolerance, the SCA was apolitical and implicitly conservative in the 1950s and 60s. This conservatism possibly stemmed from appeasing the conservative Afrikaans-speaking section.¹⁴² The SCA divided into racially and linguistically separate structures in 1951 because of English fears of Afrikaans domination. However, Afrikaans-speakers had long demanded separation and had taken the bulk of its membership into a new *Afrikaanse Christen Studentevereniging*.¹⁴³ During the mid-1960s the SCA left the World Student Christian Federation after the world body condemned apartheid. This is discussed in chapter ten.

Separate to the SCAs were the Anglican Students' Societies (affiliated to the Anglican Students' Federation) established after the War on all English-medium campuses as well

¹³⁶ BC 586 O3.1, 'Minutes of an SRC meeting adjourned from the 28th August, held on Wednesday 5 September 1956 at 6 p.m. at City Buildings', p. 5; A2.1, Maeder Osler to Jonty (Driver) and Ros (Traub), 5.6.1964.

¹³⁷ *Rhodeo* vol. 12 no. 3, 29.8.1958; 27.10.1962; vol. 17 no. 20, 19.9.1963; vol. 19 no. 6, 8.4.1965.

¹³⁸ BC 586 O5.1, David Clain to Neville Rubin, 17.2.1958, p. 3.

¹³⁹ <http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/religion/> accessed 26.9.2010.

¹⁴⁰ *Die Stellenbosse Student* 1967, pp. 119-120.

¹⁴¹ R. Elphick, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76.

¹⁴² BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Derek Bostock, 7.8.1962; Derek Bostock to Adrian Leftwich, 10.8.1962.

¹⁴³ *Rhodeo*, 4.8.1951.

as at Fort Hare and Stellenbosch.¹⁴⁴ The ASF preached non-racialism and liberalism and during the 1960s engaged with radical theology and political thought, its newsletters, for example, interrogating the ideas of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran theologian murdered by the Nazis.¹⁴⁵ The National Catholic Federation of Students (NCFS) was established in 1945 by a socialist vice-president of NUSAS, Jimmy Stewart, and had branches on most university campuses. The NCFS remained closely associated with NUSAS, even bearing the inscription 'in association with NUSAS' and hosted its congresses simultaneously with NUSAS at the same venue. It remained consistently liberal – most members in the 1960s were believed to be supporters of the Progressive or Liberal Parties - although pressure from students and priests at Pretoria pulled it to the right and even in opposition to NUSAS on occasion.¹⁴⁶ At Fort Hare religious societies like the NCFS and ASF provided an outlet for political expression during the politically oppressive 1960s.¹⁴⁷

The conservative Cold War environment of the 1950s witnessed a religious revival in Britain.¹⁴⁸ South Africa was no exception. At Pietermaritzburg, attendance at religious meetings surpassed that of all other society meetings together.¹⁴⁹ Campus crusades led by Canon Bryan Green and Dr John Stott of the London-based evangelical Anglican University Christian Mission inspired a mass following¹⁵⁰ as did the Oxford Movement or the Moral Rearmament Movement which eschewed politics and sought a change in heart and a dedication to a life of purity amongst its adherents.¹⁵¹ During the late 1960s, Michael Cassidy's African Enterprise also drew packed meetings.¹⁵²

An Islamic Society existed at Wits during the 1950s and early 60s¹⁵³ and a Muslim prayer room existed at UCT along with those provided for other faiths. In the late 1960s a series of controversial debates, political rather than religious, between Zionists and Muslims regarding Israel/Palestine took place at UCT.¹⁵⁴ UCT hosted inter-faith meetings during the late 1950s¹⁵⁵ while Wits launched an 'ecumenical dialogue' in 1967.¹⁵⁶ Flowing from the

¹⁴⁴ *Die Stellenbosse Student* 1967, p. 128.

¹⁴⁵ I. Macqueen, 'Re-imagining South Africa: Black Consciousness, radical Christianity and the New Left, 1967-1977', PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2011, p. 39.

¹⁴⁶ BC 586 A2.1, Peter Mansfield to Margaret Marshall, 19.11.1965; A. Egan, *The politics of a South African Catholic student movement, 1960-1987*, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1991, pp. 6, 8, 24, 27-33, 37.

¹⁴⁷ D. Massey, *Under protest: the rise of student resistance at the University of Fort Hare*, UNISA Press, Pretoria, 2010, p. 190.

¹⁴⁸ G. Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: believing without belonging*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1995, pp. 30-32.

¹⁴⁹ BC 586 O6.1, Wits SRC Minutes, 17.4.1956; *Natal Witness*, 20.4.1956.

¹⁵⁰ *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 19, 6.8.1959; no. 22, 27.8.1959.

¹⁵¹ 'Moral Rearmament: Rhodesia/Zimbabwe', Dylan Matthews, *War prevention works: 50 stories of people resolving conflict*, http://www.afr.iofc.org/Oxford_Research_Group.pdf accessed 27.1.2011.

¹⁵² *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19 no. 13, 16.6.1967.

¹⁵³ *ibid.* vol. 13 no. 15, 8.9.1961.

¹⁵⁴ *Varsity* vol. 26 no. 14, 14.6.1967; no. 15, 21.6.1967; no. 16, 28.6.1967.

¹⁵⁵ Moisha Shinken to *Varsity*, 21.8.1958.

1960s counter-culture movement, Sufism, Buddhism and Taoism won a following at UCT and Wits.¹⁵⁷ The Dissenters Society at Rhodes hosted a Hindu swami¹⁵⁸ while Atheist/Rationalist societies existed at Wits¹⁵⁹ and UCT. Considering how alien atheism was to South Africa,¹⁶⁰ it is surprising that the UCT society upheld white South African racism and in defiance of a student body decision still hosted a whites-only dance in 1967.¹⁶¹

The English-medium universities offered a rich variety of clubs and societies for those who were interested, but the continuous complaints of student apathy meant that these were probably led and patronised only by a minority of the student body. The majority of students enthusiastically attended and participated in fun-filled intervarsity rugby matches, dances and ambitious charity rag activities,¹⁶² but though social, these became deeply controversial and politicised because of black participation – discussed in this study.

Gender relations reflected those of white South African society where women were shut out of public life and confined to the domestic arena where they were expected to fulfil the role of wife and mother. Thus women enrolled for arts and education courses – teaching being regarded as a suitable career for a woman - rather than in, for example, engineering and medicine, the Faculty of Medicine at Wits maintaining a twenty to twenty two percent female quota.¹⁶³ Rhodes offered a practical secretarial course during the 1950s, which student commentators believed was having the effect of turning the university into a ‘French finishing school for young ladies’.¹⁶⁴

With the exception of the Second World War period, which witnessed a significant exodus of men from the universities,¹⁶⁵ women, a minority on all campuses, played a subsidiary role in organised campus life and student government. Student newspapers of the 1950s and 1960s were littered with pictures of rag queens, drum majorettes, ‘girl of the month’

¹⁵⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19 no. 19, 25.8.1967.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.* no. 1, 17.2.1967; *Trend*, 1.3.1968.

¹⁵⁸ *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 1, 5.3.1964.

¹⁵⁹ A.W. Stadler, ‘Student life in the 1950s’, B. Murray, *Wits the ‘open’ years*, *op. cit.*, p. 341; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 11, 26.6.1959.

¹⁶⁰ Some Potchefstroom students believed that Wits’s Rationalist Society represented the ‘forces of darkness’. G.L. Yssel and J. Welding to *Die Wapad*, 10.5.1961.

¹⁶¹ *NUSAS Newsletter* no. 3, 1967, p. 5.

¹⁶² A.W. Stadler, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-237.

¹⁶³ F. Tobias, ‘The women of Wits 1939-1959’, BA (Honours) dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1992, pp. 68-69.

¹⁶⁴ *Rhodeo*, 13.11.1957.

¹⁶⁵ *Nux*, 27.3.1941; 18.8.1944; 18.8.1948; F. Tobias, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25; A.W. Stadler, *op. cit.*, pp. 345-346. At Pietermaritzburg in 1951 the election of the first female SRC president was disputed but it is not clear on what grounds. Some women at Fort Hare played a prominent role in campus politics, but in general, women were responsible for arranging dances and other social activities. A. Mager, ‘Girls, war, mission institutions and reproduction of the educated elite in the Eastern Cape, 1949-1959’, *Africa Seminar*, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1992, pp. 16-17. During the 1960s ‘quite a few women’ did play an active role in student affairs but Raymond Suttner believes, not as feminists. Raymond Suttner via email, 2.12.2014.

and even articles on fashion and beauty.¹⁶⁶ A somewhat paternalistic and moralistic proposal by radical Christian and SJA male SRC members to abolish UCT's rag queen competition and drum majorettes because they bred a 'definite class of floozy' was howled down because it brought ridicule to the SRC.¹⁶⁷ NUSAS was similarly sexist. Amongst the wide-ranging topics addressed by its annual winter school, none addressed women's issues or gender. Moreover, the Local Committee at Barkly House Nursery Training College even hosted a series of lectures on beauty culture.¹⁶⁸ Mannequin parades raised funds for NUSAS welfare activities¹⁶⁹ and a 'harem' of female NUSAS congress goers was auctioned off by its male counterparts.¹⁷⁰ NUSAS had only two female presidents until the 1970s, Patricia Arnett and Margaret Marshall. Both headed their campus Local Committees and in the case of Patricia Arnett, the outgoing 1951 president, Philip Tobias actively championed her candidacy.¹⁷¹ The natural successor to the 1962/3 presidency was a woman. Though she was not keen to take up the position, the male NUSAS president, Adrian Leftwich, said that however emancipated he was regarding women's role in society, he could not 'accept...a woman at the head of NUSAS, particularly in the tough political context of 1962'.¹⁷² Sexism slowly began to give way at the very end of the 1960s following the emergence of an international youth counter culture and the rise of the New Left in the wake of the student revolutions in the USA and Europe in the second half of the 1960s.

The New Left stressed popular participation in and democratisation of all institutions within society and the cultivation of new forms of consciousness and political mobilisation. An international women's movement emerged which took root on the English-medium campuses and in NUSAS in the early 1970s. The sexual revolution led to suggestions that the contraceptive pill be made available at campus student health facilities¹⁷³ while homosexuality became a topic for serious open discussion, though partly because of new legislation further criminalising it.¹⁷⁴ NUSAS supported the rights of minorities and accordingly was represented on a 'Homosexual Alliance' aimed at stopping the new legislation.¹⁷⁵ It is significant that Margaret Marshall, as chief justice of Massachusetts,

¹⁶⁶ M. Shear, *Wits: a university in the apartheid era*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1996, p. 7; A.W. Stadler, *op. cit.*, pp. 345-346. See for example *Varsity*, *Wits Student*, *Nux*, *Dome* and *Rhodeo* of the 1950s and 1960s. *Nux* at Pietermaritzburg had a long running column, 'Hags', which discussed somewhat dismissively the dating details and dress of women on the campus.

¹⁶⁷ *Varsity* vol. 16 no. 10, 24.4.1958. It is interesting that some student leaders at Stellenbosch were having similar reservations about the damaging effects of beauty competitions on innocent, impressionable young girls as well as the manner in which they were lured into participation in such events.

¹⁶⁸ BC 586 B1, J. Alder, 'NUSAS, 37th Student Assembly, July 1961. Report on Barkly House', p. 1.

¹⁶⁹ *Dome*, August 1960.

¹⁷⁰ *Nux* no. 5, 1.8.1955; *SA Student* vol. 21 no. 1, August 1955.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Phillip Tobias, 4.12.1997.

¹⁷² BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to Denis (Hunt), Mike (Gardiner) and Thami (Mhlambiso), 5.6.1962.

¹⁷³ *Varsity* vol. 26 no. 9, 10.5.1967; no. 14, 14.6.1967.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.* vol. 27 no. 2, 13.3.1968.

¹⁷⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 21 no. 2, 28.2.1969.

wrote the ground-breaking and precedent-setting judgement legalising same-sex unions in her state in 2003.¹⁷⁶ UCT's famous 1968 'Mafeje sit-in' (discussed during the course of the study) embraced 'free love' and so incorporated a 'love-in'.¹⁷⁷ 'Sit-ins' were new forms of protest which entailed the occupation of a building of some power institution in society. These often included 'teach-ins', open ended participatory seminars pioneered by American student Vietnam war protesters and were frequently accompanied by guitar playing and folk-singing. The political and social conscience lyrics of musicians like Bob Dylan and in the 1970s, Sixto Rodriguez,¹⁷⁸ made a deep impression on left wing South African students. Not surprisingly then, folk singing and attendance at the *Gorrelpot* folk singing club were banned by the Pretoria SRC because they would promote liberal values.¹⁷⁹ Denim, the sartorial symbol of the 1960s youth counter-culture, finally displaced the conservative university dress code¹⁸⁰ against which students had chafed since the 1940s.¹⁸¹ Despite these social and cultural changes, South African students, both black and white, were far more socially, morally and politically conservative than their American and European counterparts. For example, a drug culture did not take root at South African universities during the 1960s, though in 1970 preparations for a NUSAS protest was accompanied by marijuana.¹⁸²

Liberalism during the Second World War

The Second World War led to an influx of people into the urban areas to take advantage of the labour opportunities opened up by the expanding war-time economy. Linked to this, South Africa experienced an increase in industrial action and subsistence protests. During the early stages of the War, when the Allies were on the defensive, the UP government appeared to be liberalising. The social and economic interdependence of black and white began to be recognised as well as the permanence of a settled urban black population – a situation accepted by the 1947 Fagan Commission on urban Africans. However, this did

¹⁷⁶ 'Former Mass. Chief justice on life, liberty and gay marriage', 7.6.2013, <http://www.npr.org/2013/06/07/189288605/former-mass-chief-justice-on-life-liberty-and-gay-marriage.htm> accessed 1.2.2015.

¹⁷⁷ R. Erbmann, 'Conservative revolutionaries, anti-apartheid activism at the University of Cape Town 1963-1973', BA thesis, University of Oxford, 2005, Chapter 2, http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library/pages/library_resources/article_papers/1963-1973-conservative-revolutionaries.htm accessed 20.1.2014.

¹⁷⁸ See, for example, the 2012 documentary *Searching for Sugarman*.

¹⁷⁹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19 no. 8, 12.5.1967.

¹⁸⁰ The dress code was evidently strictly adhered to. As late as 1968, a student participating in the 'Mafeje sit-in' was dressed in a jacket and tie, the appropriate attire for a visit to the university's administration building in which the sit-in was staged. In 1966 however, students were reluctantly allowed into parliament in jeans, denim jackets and cut-off ties, inviting disbelieving stares from other occupants of the visitors' gallery.

¹⁸¹ BC 586 O6.1, Wits SRC Minutes, 17.4.1956; *Cape Times*, 9.6.1950; *Die Matie* vol. 4 no. 13, 13.10.1950; *SA Student* vol. 20 no. 2, March 1955; *Natal Witness*, 20.4.1956; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19 no. 1, 3.3.1967; E. Brookes, *op. cit.*, p. 142; M. Shear, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁸² G. Moss, *The new radicals: a generational memoir of the 1970s*, Jacana, Johannesburg, 2014, p. 24.

not necessarily imply a commitment to extending voting rights to urban Africans.¹⁸³ The pass laws were applied less rigorously while African trade unions were promised official recognition.¹⁸⁴ At the same time, the recognition of Africans as 'social citizens' was implicit in the mooted extension of state social welfare benefits, for example, a national health insurance scheme, to all South Africans.¹⁸⁵ Importantly, in 1942, Smuts announced that 'segregation had fallen on evil days'. The Atlantic Charter and its vision of a post-War democratic dispensation had reverberations in South Africa. So too did the 'Four Freedoms', which with their origins in Roosevelt's 'New Deal', 'marked a new era in Western liberalism'. The SAIRR investigated ways of applying the Atlantic Charter to African conditions,¹⁸⁶ while the Four Freedoms inspired the ANC's 'African Claims' and bill of rights, the former demanding *inter alia* full enfranchisement, justice and state social welfare for Africans.¹⁸⁷ Against the background of European fascism and far-right extremism in South Africa, Marquard made a case for socialism.¹⁸⁸ Marquard argued that South Africa had reached the limits of liberal reformism and thus future improvements in African living conditions would only be achieved by a militant, non-racial industrial working class movement.¹⁸⁹ Marquard, along with other liberals in the employ of the Union Defence Force's Army Education Service, exposed soldiers to liberal democratic ideas and in Marquard's case, an inclusive non-racial South African nationalism.¹⁹⁰

NUSAS after the Second World War

The cessation of hostilities in Europe and North Africa in 1944-5 led to a large influx of ex-service people (mainly male) into the English universities.¹⁹¹ Imbued with anti-fascist democratic ideals instilled by the War itself and by the Army Education Service,¹⁹² ex-service people came to play an influential role in university life until the late 1940s.¹⁹³ They also tipped the balance of power in NUSAS away from the white South Africanists and

¹⁸³ S. Dubow, 'South Africa and South Africans: nationality, belonging, citizenship', R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager and B. Nasson (eds), *The Cambridge history of South Africa*, vol. 2, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, p. 50.

¹⁸⁴ P. Lewsen, 'Liberals in politics and administration, 1936-1948', J. Butler *et al.* (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 104, 105-6.

¹⁸⁵ S. Dubow, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

¹⁸⁶ P. Rich, *White power and the liberal conscience: racial segregation and South African liberalism 1921-1960*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1984, pp. 72, 85.

¹⁸⁷ T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1985, pp. 23-24.

¹⁸⁸ A. Egan, 'South African liberalism and South African history: an ongoing challenge', *Focus* issue 65, July 2012, p. 24, http://hsf.org.za/resource-centre/focus-65/Focus_65%20Full20Journal.pdf/view accessed 10.3.2014.

¹⁸⁹ J. Burger (Leo Marquard), *The black man's burden*, cited in R. de Villiers, 'Leo Marquard, a memoir', p. 5, www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpages/DC/remay78.3.pdf accessed 12.3.2014; S. Dubow, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

¹⁹⁰ N. Roos, *Ordinary springboks: white servicemen and social justice in South Africa 1939-1961*, Ashgate, Aldershot and Burlington, 2005, pp. 49-50, 53-54, 56.

¹⁹¹ *Rhodeo* vol. 8 no. 3, 24.3.1945; *Varsity*, 2.8.1946; *Rand Daily Mail*, 2.7.1947; R.F. Currey, *op. cit.*, p. 111; H. Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

¹⁹² N. Roos, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50, 53-54, 56.

¹⁹³ *Wus Views* vol. 11 no. 3, April 1947; B. Murray, *Wits: the 'open' years*, *op. cit.*, p. 104; H. Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 236; S. Forman, *op. cit.*, pp. 80, 82.

ensured that it moved in a far more recognisably liberal and racially inclusive direction. The first post-war NUSAS executive under the presidency of Arnold Klopper, an Afrikaans-speaking medical student, vice-president of the Wits SRC, member of FOPS and the Students' Labour League,¹⁹⁴ was devoid of segregationists and with a further three socialist¹⁹⁵ and two liberal incumbents, was probably the organisation's most radical until the 1970s.

At the annual council meeting in July 1945, NUSAS took what many white South Africanist students believed was another dangerous step into party politics and the white 'race' question by denouncing in the name of 'defending democracy in education' the opposition NP's attempt to impose racial segregation on the universities.¹⁹⁶ This private member's bill arose from an unsuccessful attempt by the ANS and Nationalist students to remove a coloured member of the Student Socialist Party from the UCT SRC in 1944.¹⁹⁷ This in turn led to the adoption by the UCT student body of the 'Status quo agreement' which upheld academic non-segregation (integrated lectures, academic societies and SRCs) but acknowledged the existence of a social colour bar on the campus – mainly a prohibition on racially mixed dances, residences and sport¹⁹⁸ - but not the tea room and ablutions. Far more controversially, Fort Hare's application for membership of NUSAS was finally approved in 1945.¹⁹⁹ This paved the way for the affiliation of other black educational institutions such as Hewat Training College in Athlone,²⁰⁰ UNNE (whose representation on the Durban SRC was abolished by the university authorities in 1946)²⁰¹ and somewhat later, both the Pius the Twelfth Catholic University College in Basutoland²⁰² and the Bantu Normal College in Pretoria.²⁰³

The admission of Fort Hare to NUSAS marked a decisive turning point for the organisation. NUSAS effectively abandoned segregation and embraced a liberal, racially inclusive understanding of South Africanism. At the same time, it dealt a blow to exclusive white South Africanism and a possible rapprochement with the Afrikaans universities, some of

¹⁹⁴ *Nux* no. 6, 22.8.1945; *SA Student*, August 1945; B. Murray, *Wits: the 'open' years*, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

¹⁹⁵ Jimmy Stewart also founded the NCFCS. Oliver Caldecott was a member of the UCT FOPS branch. *Varsity* vol. 3 no. 4, 23.6.1944; vol. 5 no. 6, 2.8.1946; A. Egan, *The politics of a South African Catholic student movement*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁹⁶ BC 586 B1 Council Minutes 1945, pp. 8-9; *SA Student*, August 1945.

¹⁹⁷ *Varsity*, 16.10.1944; J. Stewart and O. Caldecott, 'Open letter to Mr J.H. Hofmeyr', *Trek*, 9.2.1945; Union of South Africa, *Debates of the House of Assembly, 20 January to 12 June 1945*, column 5478; *Wus Views* vol. 9 no. 2, 11.4.1945.

¹⁹⁸ S. Forman, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-72, 79-81.

¹⁹⁹ BC 586 B1 Council Minutes 1945, pp. 7-9; Le Roux Rantshaba to *SA Student*, August 1945; *Die Burger*, 5.7.1945; *Star*, 5.7.1945; *Die Vaderland*, 5.7.1945; *Varsity* vol. 4 no. 6, 31.7.1945.

²⁰⁰ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1946, p. 27.

²⁰¹ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1946, p. 12, 14, 16; 1947, p. 2; *Nux* no. 5, 24.6.1946.

²⁰² BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1951, p. 6.

²⁰³ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1951, p. 7.

whose representatives observed the 1945 council meeting. The UCOFS NUSAS branch disaffiliated and dissolved, its mandate for continued existence being predicated on NUSAS remaining white.²⁰⁴ The UCT SRC voted to disaffiliate from NUSAS too, but was unable to secure a mandate from the ex-service people-augmented student body to effect this.²⁰⁵ Simultaneously, the conservative UP-supporting SRC members, the 1944 NUSAS president, and some Stellenbosch students, attempted unsuccessfully to establish a new white national student federation²⁰⁶ by exploiting the organisational chaos in the Afrikaans student world that followed the terminal decline of the ANS, a victim of the 1943 internecine turf war between the *Ossewabrandwag* and the NP. Meanwhile in NUSAS itself, the FOPS-controlled Wits SRC and the newly affiliated black centres attempted equally unsuccessfully to transform NUSAS into an overtly political organisation which would promote 'equality of political opportunity' and not just 'equality of educational and economic opportunity' for all South Africans and would actively 'build democracy' in South Africa and not just 'defend' South Africa's partial, flawed, white 'democracy'.²⁰⁷ These measures indicated that the radical left was moving against the grain of the white electorate.

The political triumph of the hitherto disunited forces of radical Afrikaner nationalism represented by the shock 1948 electoral victory of the *Herenigde Nasionale Party* (HNP) and its Afrikaner Party (AP) ally - the latter a moderately nationalist party established by Hertzog following his exit from the HNP in 1943, which ironically included OB members excluded by the HNP²⁰⁸ - was the greatest disaster to befall South Africa in the twentieth century. It also dealt a mortal blow to white South Africanism as represented by the defeated UP. The South African radical left, including the ANC, realised with foreboding that the extreme racial separation envisaged in the Nationalist Alliance's apartheid policy and the fascist tendencies exhibited by many of its adherents, posed a far greater threat to the interests of the black majority and the pursuit of democracy than the UP and its segregation policy ever had. Nonetheless, like UP adherents, many radicals believed that the Nationalist election victory was a temporary aberration (the Alliance won less than forty percent of the vote), which would be reversed at the next election.²⁰⁹ Accordingly, FOPS and the Springbok Legion approached Wits UP supporters with a view to forming an anti-

²⁰⁴ Interview with Phillip Tobias, 4.12.1997; *Rand Daily Mail*, 7.7.1945; *Irawa*, August 1945.

²⁰⁵ *Cape Times*, 9.8.1945; *Die Burger*, 10.8.1945, 14.8.1945; *Varsity* vol. 4 no. 7, 27.8.1945; *Nux* no. 6, 22.8.1945; *New Era* vol. 1 no. 34, 27.9.1945.

²⁰⁶ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1946, p. 2; *Cape Times*, 9.8.1945; *Die Burger*, 10.8.1945; *Varsity* vol. 4 no. 7, 27.8.1945.

²⁰⁷ BC 586 B1 'Draft constitution 1946'; Assembly Minutes 1946, pp. 2-3; *SA Student*, 1.10.1946.

²⁰⁸ D. Welsh, *The rise and fall of apartheid*, Jonathan Ball, Cape Town and Johannesburg, 2009, p. 27.

²⁰⁹ 'Telling Vorster where to get off', extract from Joe Slovo, *The unfinished autobiography*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1995, *Mail and Guardian*, 24.11.1995; D. Welsh, *The rise and fall of apartheid*, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

Nationalist front, but were spurned for their efforts.²¹⁰ UP-supporting students focussed their attention instead on shoring up white South Africanism and winning non-Nationalist Afrikaners and moderate Nationalists to this cause.

The first NUSAS assembly meeting a few months after the fateful general election formed part of a 'congress', a student festival composed of a drama festival, sports tournament, art exhibition and debating competition intended to draw all South African students into the national union on the basis of a common studenthood.²¹¹ However, participants in the NUSAS assembly deliberations came away from the congress anything but united. The UCT delegation, composed of a conservative SCA member and UP Youth activists,²¹² was determined that NUSAS would pursue white co-operation. The radical Wits SRC²¹³ was equally determined that in view of the change of government and the fact that the NP had threatened to implement university apartheid in its election manifesto that NUSAS would adopt an actively progressive policy in student affairs. Against the wishes of Durban and UCT, the latter because such a measure would forever deter the return of the Afrikaans centres, the assembly voted to enshrine in the constitution the principle of equality and non-segregation in university affairs.²¹⁴ However, it was the social colour bar that proved to be the most fatally divisive measure of the 1948 assembly. Against the strident opposition of Wits and the black centres, the 1947 NUSAS assembly had adopted a social colour bar aimed at excluding black students from the thoughtlessly and insensitively arranged official 1947 congress ball held at UCT where the 'Status quo agreement' was in force.²¹⁵ Arguing in 1948 that it could not remain in an organisation which discriminated against its student body, the Hewat College delegation was instrumental in the lifting of this colour bar and the decision that in future all NUSAS congress functions would be open to all.²¹⁶ This was the last straw.

In August 1948 the UCT SRC voted to secede from NUSAS. In doing so it joined Rhodes

²¹⁰ B. Murray, 'The "democratic" left at Wits 1943-1948: the Federation of Progressive Students and student politics', *Democracy, popular precedents, practice and culture*, University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop, 1994, p. 21.

²¹¹ Interview with Phillip Tobias, 4.12.1997.

²¹² These included the daughter of the UP mayor of Durban. Interview with Phillip Tobias, 4.12.1997.

²¹³ The Wits delegation and Wits NUSAS executive members comprised an independent radical, Sydney Brenner and three, perhaps four members of the CPSA – George Clayton, Harold Wolpe and Mervyn Susser. Phillip Tobias was regarded as a left wing liberal but was apparently recruited into the CPSA by Lionel Forman, one time editor of the *Witwatersrand Student*. S. Forman, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

²¹⁴ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1948, pp. 11-13; *Guardian*, 15.7.1948; *Rhodeo* vol. 1 no. 6, 30.7.1948.

²¹⁵ Interview with Phillip Tobias, 4.12.1997; BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1947, pp. 8-9; *Star*, 1.7.1947; *Argus*, 3.7.1947; *Cape Times*, 4.7.1947; *Varsity* vol. 6 no. 10, 1.8.1947; *Nux*, 10.9.1947; S. Forman and A. Odendaal (eds.), *A trumpet from the housetops: the selected writings of Lionel Forman*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1992, p. xxi; S. Forman, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-94.

²¹⁶ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1948, pp. 16-17; *Varsity* vol. 7 no. 7, 5.8.1948.

and Natal Training College,²¹⁷ the former defending its 1947 disaffiliation by alleging that NUSAS was dominated by Jews and Indians who with the black centres and unrepresentative branches made policy opposed by the large (white) universities.²¹⁸ Durban followed soon after with similarly racist reasons and an objection to the inclusion of academic non-segregation in the NUSAS constitution.²¹⁹ With NUSAS effectively shattered, the stakes were high for winning over its former membership. In August 1948 the *Broederbond* was instrumental in the launch of a new *Afrikaanse Studentebond* (ASB)²²⁰ which brought together a whole host of competing Afrikaans-speaking student organisations hitherto divided by ideological, regional and organisational differences.²²¹ The ASB was open to Afrikaans-speaking Protestant whites and aimed to champion their cultural interests. One of its chief objectives was to challenge NUSAS, which because of its pursuit of racial integration, it regarded as 'communist'. In accordance with the ASB's apartheid principles, it envisaged the creation of a confederally linked 'English Bond' to replace NUSAS.²²²

The NUSAS executive under the presidency of Phillip Tobias mounted an all-embracing campaign to win back the university centres.²²³ NUSAS's honorary president, J.H. Hofmeyr, privately advised NUSAS to stick to its principles even if it meant the death of the organisation, and not back-down on the inclusion of Fort Hare, a decision he nonetheless had regarded at the time as premature and the reason for the disaffiliations.²²⁴ Under the close interested scrutiny of ASB observers from Pretoria University and the hostile interventions of local Nationalists, Tobias, the Local NUSAS Committee and ex-service people failed by ten votes to convince UCT's largest ever student mass meeting to

²¹⁷ *Cape Times*, 18.8.1948.

²¹⁸ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1948, p. 3; *SA Student* vol. 11 no. 4, November 1947. Rhodes attended the 1948 congress because a centre wishing to disaffiliate from NUSAS could only do so after the required two years' notice of this intention to do so had elapsed.

²¹⁹ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1948, pp. 2-3; *Die Burger*, 16.8.1948; *Cape Times*, 16.8.1948; *Nux*, 1.9.1948.

²²⁰ A.N. Pelzer, *Die Afrikaner-Broederbond: eerste 50 jaar*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1980, p. 145.

²²¹ The post-war Afrikaans student organisations included the following: An *Afrikaanse Studentebond* (ASB) was founded at Bloemfontein in December 1945 by the NP to counter the discredited Nazi ANS. *Die Matie*, 12.4.1946; *Die Nuwe Orde*, 3.1.1946; *Die Wapenskou*, November 1945. The Christian Republican Student Union based at Potchefstroom and Bloemfontein was also an anti-ANS NP creation. It supported a Kruger style, authoritarian, theocratic republic. A Republican Student Union also existed at Pretoria University. P. Furlong, *The crown and the swastika: the impact of the radical right on the Afrikaner Nationalist movement in the fascist era*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1991, p. 231. The South African Student Federation was formed at Potchefstroom in September 1946. It was a Christian, Afrikaans united front of SRCs and student organisations aimed at countering the 'communist' NUSAS. The *Federasie van Blanke Suid-Afrikaner Studente* was established in July 1947 as a white Afrikaans student group to fight for Christianity and Afrikaans language rights and to oppose communism. Its membership included students from all campuses. *Nux*, 25.6.1947.

²²² *Die Burger*, 16.8.1948; *Star*, 16.8.1948.

²²³ *Guardian*, 19.8.1948; *Cape Times*, 21.8.1948; *SA Student Special Edition*, August 1948.

²²⁴ Interview with Phillip Tobias, 4.12.1997.

withdraw the SRC's notice of disaffiliation.²²⁵

The UCT SRC went ahead with its plans to host an inter-SRC conference, the prelude to a new national student organisation. In January 1949 a preliminary meeting of representatives of all the white universities failed to reach a consensus regarding future co-operation. With the exception of Durban, all the English-medium representatives refused to be part of any organisation which excluded black students, the demand of their Afrikaans-medium counterparts.²²⁶ Gerrit Viljoen²²⁷ of the University of Pretoria's compromise that Pretoria would forego its affiliation to the ASB and join instead a whites-only body that would liaise with a separately constituted black structure at federal executive level, was found unacceptable.²²⁸ This inter-SRC meeting demonstrated to many white South Africanists that their dream of white unity was becoming increasingly unrealistic and that support for the ASB, radical Afrikaner nationalism and extreme racial separation, was not just a minority phenomenon as many of them had mistakenly believed.

The realities of NP rule were becoming apparent by the end of 1948. In response to the ASB's plea that black students be removed from Wits and UCT,²²⁹ Malan, the new prime minister, announced in parliament in August 1948 that an 'intolerable state of affairs' and an 'unpleasant relationship' between black and white existed at some universities which would be remedied by the introduction of university apartheid.²³⁰ Rhodes returned to NUSAS in August 1948. It argued, inaccurately, that the national union's racial policy was less progressive than that of the SCA²³¹ but in reality it did not wish to be associated with the NP which opposition to NUSAS implied.

Campus politics re-aligned in the face of the change of government and new distinctly liberal organisations came into existence. At UCT and Wits these won control of their respective SRCs.²³² At UCT, the student UP split, its left wing joining socialists and other liberals in the new Students Liberal Association (SLA) established in August 1948 to fight

²²⁵ *Die Burger*, 13.8.1948; *Cape Times*, 13.8.1948; 16.8.1948; *Guardian*, 19.8.1948; *Varsity* vol. 7 no. 7, 17.8.1948; *SA Student Special Edition*, August 1948.

²²⁶ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1948, p. 23; *Rhodeo* vol. 2 no. 2, 12.3.1949; *Varsity* vol. 8 no. 1, 11.3.1949; *SA Student (UCT Special Edition)*, 31.3.1949; *Witwatersrand Student* no. 2, 24.2.1949.

²²⁷ He became chairperson of the *Broederbond* and rector of Rand Afrikaans University. As an NP minister in the 1980s he expounded 'group rights' in an attempt to retain political power in white hands.

²²⁸ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1948, p. 23; *Rhodeo* vol. 2 no. 2, 12.3.1949; *Varsity* vol. 8 no. 1, 11.3.1949; *SA Student (UCT Special Edition)*, 31.3.1949; *Witwatersrand Student* no. 2, 24.2.1949.

²²⁹ *Die Nuwe Perdeby*, 3.9.1948.

²³⁰ Union of South Africa, *Debates of the House of Assembly*, column 219, 16.8.1948. Two 'intolerable situations' were black Wits medical students dissecting white cadavers and Rhodes students hosting their Fort Hare counterparts to dinner in the Rhodes cafeteria. *Irawa*, June 1948; *Rhodeo* vol. 1 no. 6, 30.7.1948.

²³¹ *Cape Times*, 18.8.1948; *Rhodeo* vol. 1 no. 7, 14.8.1948; no. 8, 30.7.1948.

²³² *Varsity* vol. 7 no. 10, 1.10.1948.

university apartheid and secure re-affiliation to NUSAS.²³³ At Wits FOPS lost control of the SRC and ultimately disbanded because it had become too sectarian to mobilise campus support against university apartheid.²³⁴ Its adherents moved into a new Wits Students Liberal Association (SLA) and in so doing turned it into a more radical and overtly political body than its liberal founders, such as Michael O' Dowd (later of Anglo American who espoused capitalist modernisation as a remedy for apartheid), had intended.²³⁵ Evidently precipitated by the anti-British tendencies displayed by the NP in its republican orientation and immigration policy, a Students' Commonwealth Liberal Union was founded at Rhodes. This organisation espoused closer unity with the British Commonwealth and a conservative liberal policy of co-operation with the black population 'as the only means of preserving Western civilisation and averting communism'.²³⁶

A branch of the ANCYL was established at Fort Hare in November 1948 by the organisation's national president, A.P. Mda. This branch was militantly African nationalist and non-collaborationist. At Fort Hare's 'Completers Social' in 1949, Robert Sobukwe, president of the Fort Hare SRC and later founder of the Pan Africanist Congress, denounced missionary liberalism and called on students to transform Fort Hare into an African nationalist institution like Stellenbosch was to Afrikaners.²³⁷ The branch devoted much of its time to the drawing up of the ANCYL's Programme of Action,²³⁸ which advocated the use of strikes, boycotts and non-collaboration to achieve African liberation. Under pressure from its youth league, this was eventually adopted by the hitherto moderate, constitutionally-orientated ANC at its 1949 national congress as its new militant anti-apartheid action plan. The ANCYL took control of the Fort Hare SRC in 1948, eclipsing the AAC, which in the aftermath of the NP victory appeared too compliant to white rule.²³⁹ Emerging from the AAC and the NEUM in 1951 were the Society for Young Africans (SOYA) and the Durban Students' Union (DSU) respectively, the former winning strong support at Fort Hare and the latter at UNNE.²⁴⁰ Although Fort Hare later denied this, at the end of 1948 unverified reports suggested that it had disaffiliated from NUSAS.²⁴¹

²³³ *Cape Times*, 31.8.1948; *Guardian*, 19.8.1948.

²³⁴ B. Murray, 'The "democratic" left at Wits 1943-1948', *op. cit.*, p. 2.

²³⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* no. 1, 6.10.1948.

²³⁶ *Rhodeo* vol. 1 no. 9, 10.9.1948.

²³⁷ B. Pogrud, *How can man die better... Sobukwe and apartheid*, Peter Halban, London, 1990, pp. 33-34.

²³⁸ T.R.H. White, 'Z.K. Matthews and the formation of the ANC Youth League at the University College of the Fort Hare', *Kleio* 27, 1995, pp. 131, 138.

²³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 129.

²⁴⁰ 'Opening address at first conference of SOYA by I.B. Tabata, December 20, 1951', T. Karis and G. Carter (eds), *From protest to challenge: hope and challenge 1935-1952*, vol. 2, Hoover Institution, Stanford, 1973, p. 506.

²⁴¹ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1949, p. 6.

In early 1949, the SLA-controlled UCT SRC voted to re-affiliate to NUSAS.²⁴² In order to ensure the total collapse of NUSAS, the NP SRC members, their campus supporters and UP right wingers did their utmost (often underhandedly) to postpone having this decision taken to the student body for its ratification.²⁴³ NUSAS and the SLA again mounted a huge publicity campaign including the hosting of a NUSAS gala week to impress on students the practical benefits of NUSAS.²⁴⁴ The mass meeting voted to re-affiliate as did, overwhelmingly, a referendum.²⁴⁵

In the meantime, NUSAS had done much to address the grievances of the disaffected campuses. The voting power of the large centres was substantially augmented so as to dilute the power of the small (black) centres and branches.²⁴⁶ Under the leadership of Tobias, NUSAS adopted the organising slogan, 'unity without uniformity'. The loyalty of NUSAS's vast conservative student base would be won and retained through the provision of an efficient student welfare/benefits programme and exciting varied congress programme. To ensure that NUSAS policy was broadly representative of its conservative base, the student assembly and policy making powers were firmly vested in the hands of the affiliated SRCs. Student bodies and SRCs could dissociate from policy with which they were not in agreement.²⁴⁷ Legassick argued that these reforms of Tobias provided NUSAS some space in which to embark on a moderate political programme.²⁴⁸ At the 1949 NUSAS conference, the constitutional enshrinement of academic non-segregation, which had caused so much dissatisfaction the previous year, was revisited. The black centres and the tiny radical Pretoria University branch refused to have this removed from the constitution to an entrenched schedule of policy from which centres could dissociate. Eventually a Wits CPSA-brokered compromise was accepted. The actual words 'upholding academic non-segregation' were removed from the constitution but the sentiment was retained. Durban was permitted to uphold segregation²⁴⁹ and thus returned to NUSAS in early 1950.

With its mass student base secured and moreover, united in the defence of university autonomy,²⁵⁰ NUSAS laid the foundations for its eventually vast, all-embracing local and international academic freedom campaign. On the basis of the freedom of the university to decide who, what, how and by whom to teach – adapted by Tobias from a speech

²⁴² *Cape Times*, 5.4.1949; *SA Student (Special UCT Edition)*, 31.3.1949.

²⁴³ *Varsity* vol. 8 no. 2, 24.3.1949; no. 4, 21.4.1949; R. Kriger to *Varsity* vol. 8 no. 5, 19.5.1949.

²⁴⁴ *SA Student (Special UCT Edition)*, 31.3.1949.

²⁴⁵ *Cape Times*, 6.4.1949; *Varsity* vol. 8 no. 4, 21.4.1949.

²⁴⁶ *Rhodeo* vol. 1 no. 6, 30.7.1948.

²⁴⁷ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1949, pp. 18-21, 24-25.

²⁴⁸ M. Legassick, 'The National Union of South African Students: ethnic cleavage and ethnic integration in the universities', *Occasional paper no. 4, African Studies Center, University of California Los Angeles*, Los Angeles, 1967, pp. 18-19, 21.

²⁴⁹ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1949, pp. 18-21, 24-25; *Guardian*, 21.7.1949; *Varsity* vol. 8 no. 7, 2.8.1949.

²⁵⁰ BC 586 Assembly Minutes 1949, p. 30.

delivered at Wits by J.H. Hofmeyr on Roosevelt's 'Four Freedoms'²⁵¹ - NUSAS enlisted the support of civil society groups such as university staff associations, the SAIRR, churches and the press, as well as members of parliament, against the removal of black students from UCT and Wits.²⁵² The divided cabinet, in particular its AP Minister of Education, Arts and Science, J.H. Viljoen, was initially reluctant to interfere in the universities' autonomy and legislate university apartheid.²⁵³ It thus attempted to force the university authorities to do its dirty work for it by using the Nationalist press to sway public opinion against racially mixed universities by raising the old bogey of miscegenation.²⁵⁴ It also adopted administrative measures to restrict black enrolment at Wits and UCT. In 1949 the state scholarships awarded to Africans studying medicine at Wits were withdrawn²⁵⁵ and all foreign Africans were barred from white universities including, for example, Wits student, Eduardo Mondlane, the future founder of the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO).²⁵⁶ From 1949 the government limited the issuance of inter-provincial permits to prospective Indian students making it increasingly difficult for those from Natal to study at Wits and UCT.²⁵⁷

Other apartheid measures appeared thick and fast on the statute books. In 1949 and 1950, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages and Immorality Amendment Acts prohibited marriages and sexual relations between whites and any other race group. The Population Registration Act of 1949 classified all according to their race with dire consequences for all regarding marriage, the franchise, living areas and schooling. In 1950 the Group Areas Act designated urban residential and business areas according to race, enabling the removal from these areas of those of the 'wrong' race.

In May 1950, the Suppression of Communism Bill was introduced in parliament. This Bill provided for the proscription of the CPSA and all communist organisations. However, its definition of 'communism' was so broad that anyone or anything advocating fundamental political, social or economic change could fall victim to its tenets. Although strictly outside the scope of education and thus outside the domain of a non-political body like NUSAS, the national union led by Tobias opposed the Bill as an abrogation of the rule of law and the right of freedom of association and academic freedom, predicting depressingly prophetically that its enactment could lead to the banning of NUSAS, the removal of staff

²⁵¹ Interview with Phillip Tobias, 4.12.1997.

²⁵² *ibid.*; BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1949, pp. 10-11.

²⁵³ *Cape Times*, 19.9.1951; *Star*, 10.9.1951.

²⁵⁴ *Rand Daily Mail*, 9.8.1949.

²⁵⁵ *SA Student*, May 1949.

²⁵⁶ P. Tobias, 'A little known chapter in the life of Eduardo Mondlane', *Geneve Afrique* vol. 16 no. 1, 1978, pp. 120-121. Article kindly supplied by Professor Philip Tobias.

²⁵⁷ B. Murray, *Wits the 'open' years*, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

and students from the university, and the censorship of the contents of courses²⁵⁸ and library holdings. Four centres abstained from voting. Some students supported the Bill, because like most white South Africans, they were anti-communist. Others did not care what happened to communists,²⁵⁹ while some avowed liberals in the Wits SLA did not initially believe that students should take a stand on a matter which had nothing to do with them. Nonetheless, many Wits liberals - like those off-campus caught in the dilemma between supporting the anti-communist aims of the Bill but not its illiberal methods of doing so - threw themselves behind their student body's resolve to oppose the measure by any lawful means available.²⁶⁰ Opposition to the Bill came from an unexpected quarter. When the intensely anti-communist UP elected to oppose the bill in defence of civil liberties, so too did the UCT SRC and student body, the latter led by UP Youth leaders Zac de Beer, the future leader of the Progressive Federal Party, and Maureen Strauss, the daughter of J.G.N. Strauss, the future leader of the UP.²⁶¹

Even though NUSAS's decision to oppose the Bill by any available legal means accorded with UP policy and was thus the 'right politics' and thus 'not politics', it was nonetheless a deeply political decision which set a precedent for the adoption of and active opposition to other overtly political measures not directly concerned with student and educational matters. Shortly before the enactment of the Suppression of Communism Act in June 1950, the CPSA dissolved itself. In 1951, former Wits CPSA branch member Harold Wolpe (sometimes accused of being 'politically homeless' by liberals afraid of communist entryism) announced that he intended transforming NUSAS into a militant, progressive body which would operate in both the student sphere and society.²⁶² The stage was set for a new battle within NUSAS. The old white South Africanist-liberal inclusiveness struggle was superseded by a new liberal-radical struggle to turn the 'students-as-such' orientation of NUSAS into that of a 'students-in-society' one.

A battery of new apartheid laws would ensure that NUSAS could not fail to take an increasingly political stand. In June 1951 the abolition of the coloured franchise in the Cape was enacted in flagrant contravention of the constitutional requirement of a two-thirds majority in both houses of parliament. This measure goaded the mobilisation of coloured voters into the Franchise Action Committee (FRAC) which, with African workers, struck in

²⁵⁸ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1950, pp. 27-28; *Rand Daily Mail*, 19.6.1950; S. Forman, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-132.

²⁵⁹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 2 no. 6, 17.5.1950.

²⁶⁰ *Guardian*, 18.5.1950; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 2 no. 4, 19.4.1950; no. 6, 17.5.1950.

²⁶¹ *Cape Times*, 13.6.1950; *Rand Daily Mail*, 13.6.1950.

²⁶² BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1951, p. 21; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 3 no. 5, 25.6.1951.

Cape Town in May 1951.²⁶³ The 'constitutional crisis' also precipitated the emergence from the ranks of the Springbok Legion, the UP and English capital, of the War Veterans Torch Commando. This mass organisation drew tens of thousands of white, coloured (and student) supporters to its huge torchlight demonstrations and processions staged in all the main urban centres of South Africa. These protested the dismantling of the constitution by the 'Malanazi' NP government and in the case of the 'Steel Commando' were aimed at forcing the government to an early election and even perhaps insurrection.²⁶⁴

With an eye on the critical 1953 general election in which it hoped to increase its minority vote and thus as an attempt to forge white unity, the NP mounted a national festival to mark the tercentenary of the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape. The ANC staged large protest rallies at the commencement of the Van Riebeeck Festival in April 1952 and students at Rhodes, angered by the organiser's failure to include Fort Hare in the (all white) student component of the festival, initially elected to boycott it along with many of their Wits and UCT counterparts, politicised like many Rhodes students, by their involvement in the Torch Commando.²⁶⁵ The success of the Van Riebeeck rallies encouraged the ANC, the South African Indian Congress and the FRAC to launch their Gandhiist passive resistance Defiance Campaign in May 1952, against six unjust laws targeting *inter alia* the pass laws, the franchise, segregation, stock culling, Bantu Authorities and group areas.²⁶⁶ This campaign elicited much support in the Eastern Cape in particular where the ANCYL, including some Fort Hare students, were active organisers and volunteers.²⁶⁷

The government's continued bulldozing of its unconstitutional disenfranchisement of coloured voters led to the Torch Commando peaking in its popularity. With a view to ousting the NP during the 1953 election, the Commando was co-opted into a United Democratic Front (UDF) with the UP and the Labour Party in April 1952,²⁶⁸ becoming embroiled in Natal separatist politics at the same time. Pietermaritzburg students attended the forty five thousand-strong 'Voice of Natal' UDF rally in their numbers in June 1952 and distributed their *Nux Crisis Edition* which accused the NP government of being 'Malanazi'. They called on students to come down from their ivory towers and enter politics directly, as politics had already entered the student domain with the assaults by Malanazi on academic

²⁶³ T. Lodge, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

²⁶⁴ N. Roos, *op. cit.*, pp. 130, 134, 138, 144, 146.

²⁶⁵ *Cape Times*, 14.8.1951; *Rhodeo Special Supplement*, 18.8.1951; *Varsity*, 17.9.1951; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 4 no. 1, 11.3.1952.

²⁶⁶ T. Lodge, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-43.

²⁶⁷ Interview with Tennyson Makiwane, T. Karis and G. Carter (eds), *From protest to challenge, a documentary history of African politics in Southern Africa, 1882-1964*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1972-1977, Microfilm collection, reel 2 XM 26:94, pp. 6-7; T. Lodge, *op. cit.*, p. 57; D. Massey, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-73.

²⁶⁸ N. Roos, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

freedom and liberty.²⁶⁹ A United Student Front (USF) was established which aimed at safeguarding basic rights of intellectual freedom.²⁷⁰ It was welcomed by Wits and UNNE students,²⁷¹ SLA adherents of the former taking a keen and active interest in both the Torch Commando and the Defiance Campaign.²⁷² UCT's response is unknown but a Students' Democratic Association supporting the open discussion of politics and equal rights for all students was formed there in March 1952 by the liberal and radical left.²⁷³ However, despite its potential support, the USF unravelled, as did the Torch Commando,²⁷⁴ on the issue of black membership, since, were black students permitted to join, the USF would be obliged to champion their political and social rights too.²⁷⁵ Being an UP-orientated body, it was not prepared to do so. Thus it was quite clear that taking a political stand was acceptable if it was a UP stand, but unacceptable if it was not.

In the midst of all of this, the Fort Hare student body - overwhelmingly ANCYL-inclined but containing a powerful SOYA minority²⁷⁶ - voted by one hundred and forty seven votes to forty seven to disaffiliate from NUSAS because it was 'a non-political organisation, unequal to approve the ideals of equality held by African nationalism'.²⁷⁷ This decision stemmed from events at the 1951 NUSAS congress. NUSAS was always of secondary importance to Fort Hare students, whose primary allegiance was to the liberation struggle. However, a significant group of Fort Hare students wished to maintain the association with the national union so as to harness it to the liberation movement in the manner of student organisations in the colonial world.²⁷⁸ It was probably for this reason then that the Fort Hare student body refused to endorse the ANCYL-initiated disaffiliation decision taken by the SRC in March 1951.²⁷⁹ The rebuffed SRC then placed a carefully crafted constitutional amendment before the 1951 NUSAS assembly which proposed that NUSAS would 'stand for political and

²⁶⁹ *Nux Crisis Edition*, 6.6.1952; *Natal Mercury*, 9.6.1952; P.S. Thompson, *Natalians first: separatism in South Africa 1909-1961*, Southern, Johannesburg, 1990, pp. 124-127.

²⁷⁰ *Nux Crisis Edition*, 6.6.1952.

²⁷¹ *Nux* no. 5, 26.6.1952.

²⁷² *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 4 no. 1, 11.3.1952; no. 2, 7.4.1952; 6.6.1952; no. 7, 20.8.1952.

Sid Shall and Margaret Holt were arrested when they entered Germiston Location without a permit. In August 1952, Diliza Mji and Nthato Motlana, Defiance Campaign organisers and executive members of the ANCYL were arrested at the Wits Medical School. Wits students attended their treason trial in university blazers, to the anger of the Wits principal who also refused to sanction any more campus meetings addressed by the Congress Alliance. BC 586 G1.6(i), M. O' Dowd to the Student Assembly, 'Wits principal's statement', 20.10.1952, B. Murray, *Wits - the 'open' years*, *op. cit.*, pp. 126, 127.

²⁷³ J. Didcott to *Varsity* 21.3.1952; *Varsity*, 21.3.1952; 24.4.1952; 16.5.1952; 27.5.1952; 19.6.1952.

²⁷⁴ M. Fridjohn, 'The Torch Commando: a study in opposition politics in South Africa, 1951-1953', BA (Honours) dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1975, p. 41.

²⁷⁵ *Dome* vol. 6 no. 3, 25.6.1952.

²⁷⁶ Interview with Tennyson Makiwane, T. Karis and G. Carter (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 4; T. Beard, 'Background to student politics at the University College of Fort Hare', H. van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds), *Student perspectives on South Africa*, *op. cit.*, pp. 167, 169.

²⁷⁷ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of Fort Hare mass meetings 1951-1956', 21.5.1952; *Evening Post*, 24.5.1952.

²⁷⁸ D. Burchell, 'The emergence and growth of student militancy at the University College of Fort Hare in the 1940s and 1950s', *Journal of the University of Durban-Westville*, New Series 3, 1986, p. 157.

²⁷⁹ D. Williams, *A history of the University College of Fort Hare, South Africa - the 1950s: the waiting years*, Edwin Mellen, Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter, 2001, pp. 114-115.

social equality of all men in South Africa'.²⁸⁰

At risk of simplifying a five hour assembly debate and endless discussion within SRCs beforehand, UCT, Durban and Rhodes, as well as many liberals on the Wits SRC were against NUSAS moving out of the educational domain and becoming overtly political as implied by the constitutional amendment.²⁸¹ However, underlying their stand was the largely unspoken opposition to the explicit demand that NUSAS champion a universal franchise, which few, if any, endorsed in their personal capacities. The Wits radical left, black and white, was faced with a dilemma. Though supporting the political sentiments of the Fort Hare motion and wishing to transform NUSAS into a progressive political body, they realised that for tactical reasons, this would have to be achieved incrementally and that the motion as it stood went too far and too fast with mortal consequences for the still fragile and tenuously united NUSAS.²⁸² The Wits radicals thus proposed that no vote be taken on the Fort Hare motion, but this was narrowly rejected and the constitutional amendment was comprehensively defeated by nineteen votes to two.²⁸³

When a year later representatives from the disaffiliated Fort Hare failed to arrive at the NUSAS congress, the devastated congress delegates postponed the commencement of the student assembly by a day in order to locate them and persuade them to attend, but in vain.²⁸⁴ A 'statement of attitude' and an amendment were proposed which read that as 'society and education [were] inseparably linked', NUSAS would accordingly 'uphold the principle of political and social equality of all' and would mobilise its members in the 'struggle against the undemocratic action of the government'. These motions were remarkably similar to Fort Hare's 1951 constitutional amendment and the fact that they were only narrowly defeated²⁸⁵ suggests that white NUSAS members had been significantly radicalised by both Fort Hare's withdrawal and the mobilisation surrounding the constitutional crisis and even perhaps the Defiance Campaign.

Shortly after the conclusion of the 1952 congress, at a time moreover when the Defiance Campaign was becoming increasingly anti-white and ultra-nationalistic, the new NUSAS president, Patricia Arnett, visited Fort Hare to persuade the student body to return to NUSAS. In a carefully managed mass meeting, Frank Mdalose an ultra-nationalistic, though conservative, Youth Leaguer (he was later to become a Bantustan functionary and founder member of the Zulu nationalist *Inkatha* Freedom Party) ensured that only one

²⁸⁰ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1951, p. 19; *Star*, 10.7.1951.

²⁸¹ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1951, pp. 19-20, 22

²⁸² BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1951, p. 20; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 3 no. 5, 25.6.1951.

²⁸³ *Star*, 10.7.1951.

²⁸⁴ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1952, p. 4.

²⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 46; *Varsity*, 8.8.1952; R. Segal, *Into exile*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1963, p. 98.

student spoke in favour of NUSAS, and badly at that.²⁸⁶

Ties with NUSAS were effectively broken for a number of years. SOYA and the ANCYL established a non-collaborationist Progressive South African Students' Union in late 1952,²⁸⁷ which delivered a blistering attack on NUSAS for its liberalism and diversion of the black liberation struggle.²⁸⁸ However, because of the escalating conflict with the Fort Hare authorities regarding the latter's paternalistic high school missionary attitude towards discipline and politics, the Progressive South African Students' Union was banned from holding its inaugural conference on the campus.²⁸⁹ Fort Hare was isolated and homeless as far as national student unions were concerned. Arguing *inter alia* that black majority membership would mitigate its liberal connections, Joe Matthews and Tennyson Makiwane, the more racially-inclusive nationalist ANCYL SRC members²⁹⁰ persuaded the Fort Hare student body to affiliate to the South African Union of Democratic Students (SAUDS), established by the Wits SLA. The Africanists and SOYA dismissed SAUDS as the 'kitchen department of NUSAS' presumably because they suspected it of being a NUSAS front whose members still participated in NUSAS. Nonetheless, SAUDS, to which was affiliated the UNNE SRC and UCT's Modern World Society, was a 'militant student union' which intended both to mobilise students in the general democratic struggle and render assistance to other political organisations.²⁹¹ Against the wishes of Durban and Rhodes and the dissociation of UCT, NUSAS agreed to co-operate with its overtly political and sectional rival if their interests coincided.²⁹² However, as was often the case with overtly political student unions, SAUDS was too sectarian to attract a wide constituency and eventually fizzled out.

Renewed attempts by Fort Hare students to cultivate co-operation between black students in South Africa were overtaken in May 1955 by the unprecedented closure of Fort Hare by the college authorities. Conflict over subsistence issues between the student body and the college authorities had continued unabated and was reinforced by external political events and insecurity regarding the future of Fort Hare. A few weeks before the introduction of Bantu Education into African schools in April 1955, a stone was thrown through the window

²⁸⁶ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-73.

²⁸⁷ The constitution was drafted by Z.B. Molete, a founder member of the Pan Africanist Congress. BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of Fort Hare mass meetings 1951-1956', 13.8.1952; 9.10.1952; D. Burchell, *op. cit.*, p. 158; G. Gerhart, *Black power in South Africa: the evolution of an ideology*, University of California Press, London, 1979, pp. 141, 145, 305.

²⁸⁸ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1953, p. 15.

²⁸⁹ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of Fort Hare mass meetings 1951-1956', 17.10.1952, *Dome* vol. 7 no. 1, 1.4.1953.

²⁹⁰ Matthews became president of the ANCYL and like Makiwane later joined the South African Communist Party. Ironically Makiwane opposed the Morogoro decision of the ANC to open membership to non-Africans.

²⁹¹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1953, p. 15; M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of Fort Hare mass meetings 1951-1956', 17.10.1952; 1.4.1953; *Advance*, 22.1.1953; *Dome* vol. 7 no. 1, 1.4.1953.

²⁹² BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1953, pp. 33-35.

of the hall where a Moral Rearmament film, 'Africa untamed', believed to disparage Africans was being shown.²⁹³ Sometime later the introduction of new stricter visiting hours at the women's residence precipitated a boycott of the annual graduation ceremony and the resignation of the SRC. Believing that a secret 'communist' 'caucus' using violence and intimidation was responsible for these actions, the Fort Hare Council and Senate sent the entire student body home under armed police guard.²⁹⁴ Students' return to the campus a month later was conditional on completing a questionnaire relating to their participation in events leading up to the closure.²⁹⁵ In what ultimately played into the government's hands as it signified an admission by the college's missionary authorities that they were unable to control their charges, a commission of inquiry into the closure was appointed under Dr J.P. Duminy, principal of the Johannesburg Technical College, M.C. Botha, a retired Nationalist academic and Edgar Brookes of Natal University,²⁹⁶ also a member of the LP. Students were mystified about the existence of the alleged 'secret caucus' but eventually concluded that the college authorities had fatally misapprehended their intention to celebrate a sporting victory with a barbeque and the consumption of the 'carcass'.²⁹⁷ Like the ANCYL and the UNNE SRC, the radical Wits SRC vehemently protested against the unjustified closure of Fort Hare.²⁹⁸ NUSAS however reserved judgement until it had more facts at its disposal.²⁹⁹ It did however rule that it was unethical to link readmission to the college on the satisfactory completion of a questionnaire as this implied that politically undesirable students would be weeded out.³⁰⁰ By the time of this fateful Fort Hare crisis, the student radical left had found a new national political home for itself.

By the end of 1952, white radicals signalled their willingness to participate in the Defiance Campaign. Moreover, in the face of increasing black anti-white sentiment, the Congresses recognised the importance of drawing progressive-minded whites into their orbit. Accordingly, the ANC and SAIC invited white 'democrats' to a meeting in Johannesburg's Darragh Hall in November 1952 from which there emerged the Congress of Democrats (COD) in January 1953. Along with other similar like-minded organisations in other parts of the country, COD submerged itself in the South African Congress of Democrats (SACOD), established in October 1953 as the white arm of the multi-racial Congress Alliance, the

²⁹³ D. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

²⁹⁴ *Golden City Post*, 8.5.1955; *New Age*, 19.5.1955; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 7 no. 3, 20.5.1955; Governing Council of the University College of Fort Hare, *Report of the Fort Hare Commission July 1955*, Lovedale Press, np., nd., c.1955, pp. 11, 23-24.

²⁹⁵ *New Age*, 2.6.1955; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 7 no. 3, 20.5.1955.

²⁹⁶ D. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

²⁹⁷ *Golden City Post*, 5.6.1955.

²⁹⁸ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1955, pp. 21-22; *New Age*, 2.6.1955; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 7 no. 3, 20.5.1955.

²⁹⁹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1955, p. 34.

³⁰⁰ BC 586 Assembly Minutes 1955, pp. 10-11; *SA Student* vol. 21 no. 1, August 1955.

other members of the Alliance being the ANC, the SAIC and the South African Coloured Peoples' Organisation. Although originally intended as a 'broad church of democratic opinion', COD (and later SACOD too) was composed primarily of radical socialists, many of whom were politically homeless ex-members of the CPSA. Moreover, liberal-orientated whites would not co-operate with white communists nor would they accept COD's and then SACOD's immediate universal franchise policy nor their separate white structures.³⁰¹ Following the defeat of the United Democratic Front in the 1953 general election, the left wing broke away from the UP and established a Liberal Party (LP) under the leadership of Native Parliamentary Representative, Margaret Ballinger. The LP was a 'broad church'. It encompassed older Cape liberals steeped in welfare liberalism, the parliamentary tradition and the politics of persuasion, many of whom were based in the Cape, and a younger more radical grouping, some of them socialists, coming from a Springbok Legion background and located in the Transvaal. Despite these differences, the LP advocated an incrementally extendable qualified franchise and a non-racial structure.³⁰²

With the establishment of the LP and SACOD, the political, ideological and tactical differences between the radical and liberal left became 'organisationally fixed'³⁰³ making it increasingly difficult for them to work together as they had done to a significant degree in the past. Campus politics and NUSAS mirrored these national developments. Crudely put, the increasingly liberalising UCT SRC – many of whose members would in future be attached to the LP³⁰⁴ - could be said to represent the LP, while the Wits SRC and particularly its NUSAS Local Committee could be said to represent SACOD. From 1953, the radical and liberal left clashed more than in the past over the degree to which NUSAS could indulge in overtly political activity, identify with the liberation movement and in the context of the Cold War, the direction of international policy. The dominant faction within the LP was parliamentary-orientated (thus focused on white politics) and utilised constitutional tactics. Thus unlike the extra-parliamentary SACOD, the LP would not consider employing strikes, boycotts and marches.³⁰⁵ This was true of the dominant liberal faction in NUSAS too. Soliciting support only from Western overseas educational bodies, the NUSAS president carefully explained that NUSAS did not use strikes and other extra-

³⁰¹ D. Everatt, *The origins of non-racialism: white opposition to apartheid in the 1950s*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 2009, pp. 98-118; N. Levy, *The final prize: my life in the anti-apartheid struggle*, South African History Online, 2011, Chapter 9, 'The Stalin fetish', <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/final-prize-norman-levy> accessed 25.2.2014.

³⁰² D. Everatt, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-148.

³⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 104.

³⁰⁴ A NUSAS executive member was privy to discussions about whether the LP ought to launch itself before or after the 1953 general election (interview with Clodagh O' Dowd, 2.4.1997). A number of UCT students, including the SRC president, John Didcott spoke at the launch of the LP in 1953. Interview with Neville Rubin, 4.4.1997.

³⁰⁵ D. Everatt, 'The politics of non-racialism: white opposition to apartheid, 1945-1960', DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 1990, pp. 15, 17, 44-45.

legal means to advance its academic freedom campaign³⁰⁶ and when approaching political parties to use their influence against university apartheid³⁰⁷ it raised the ire of the radical left for ignoring black organisations like the ANC.³⁰⁸

Determining the tactics to be employed against government intervention in the universities became more urgent in 1953. Calls by the NP for the removal of black students from UCT and Wits as well as the legislation of university apartheid occurred three times during the 1953 election.³⁰⁹ In August 1953, two Africans were elected to the UCT SRC, provoking an outraged debate in the Afrikaans press and parliament. NP MPs called on Viljoen to legislate apartheid alleging that Africans were too 'uncivilised' to warrant higher education, educated Africans became political agitators, and UCT's SRC election result revealed the degree to which communism, liberalism and inter-racial mixing, and thus implicitly miscegenation, had taken root at the mixed universities.³¹⁰ Viljoen was still reluctant to intervene directly – the Wits authorities had of their own volition imposed a racial quota on the Medical School³¹¹ - but significantly he revised the contemporary understanding of academic freedom to mean the unfettered freedom to teach and research but not who would be admitted.³¹²

In December 1953 Malan announced the appointment of a commission of inquiry 'to investigate... the practicality and financial ... implications of providing separate training facilities ... for Non-Europeans at universities'.³¹³ From the outset a split occurred between the liberals and radicals regarding participation in the Commission. The Wits and UNNE SRCs refused to participate, the former because even the act of appointing a commission amounted to an invasion and erosion of university autonomy. After a long delay, the divided NUSAS executive decided to submit evidence, though, like the liberal-dominated UCT SRC, making it clear that it did not accept the Commission's terms of reference.³¹⁴ The composition of the Commission was a reason for cautious optimism. Dr J.E. Holloway, whose tenure as Secretary of Finance long predated the NP election victory, chaired. He

³⁰⁶ BC 586 G1.6(iii), Department of International Relations, 'Memorandum on the threat to the autonomy of South African universities', December 1953, p. 6.

³⁰⁷ BC 586 G1.6(i), NUSAS, 'To all members of the Senate and House of Assembly: Memorandum on the proposal to impose academic segregation on the Universities of the Witwatersrand and Cape Town by means of legislation and government action', nd.; M. O' Dowd to T.B. Davie, 8.1.1954; A. Hepple to M. O' Dowd, 12.1.1954.

³⁰⁸ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1954, pp. 17, 22.

³⁰⁹ *Die Burger*, 11.4.1953; *Cape Times*, 16.3.1953; 20.3.1953.

³¹⁰ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates 11th Parliament* vols. 82-83, columns 2105-2107; 2567-2569; 2575-2576.

³¹¹ B. Murray, 'Wits as an 'open' university 1939-1959: black admissions to the University of the Witwatersrand', *Journal of Southern African Studies* vol. 16 no. 4, December 1990, p. 672.

³¹² Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates 11th Parliament* vols. 82-83, 2592-2594.

³¹³ Union of South Africa (no number), *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on separate training facilities for Non-Europeans at universities 1953-1954 (Holloway Commission)*, Government Printer, Pretoria, 1954, p. 2.

³¹⁴ *Varsity*, 4.3.1954.

was assisted by Dr W.F. Willcocks, a former rector of Stellenbosch, and Dr E.G. Malherbe, principal of Natal University, a respected educationist and conservative liberal who did not shrink from reminding his NP adversaries of their recent Nazi sympathies. Beale has argued that the appointment of Malherbe underscored Viljoen's approval of the segregated system which pertained at Natal, thus further reinforcing the view that Viljoen understood apartheid as meaning little more than tightening up segregation.³¹⁵ The absence of any apartheid ideologues like Hendrik Verwoerd and Werner Eiselen (an ethnologist), Minister and Secretary respectively of the increasingly powerful Native Affairs Department, responsible for the Bantu Education Act of 1953, was heartening. This Act imposed an inferior system of education on African children fitting them for their inferior position in the South African economy to which they would forever be doomed were they to remain outside the ethnic states of the future hazily envisaged for them by the apartheid racial engineers. NUSAS rejected Bantu Education *in toto* because 'one cultural heritage of mankind' and one economic system implied that there ought to be only one system of education.³¹⁶ It gave evidence to the Eiselen Commission to this effect,³¹⁷ but feared correctly that the ideologues intended extending apartheid into higher education too.

NUSAS's evidence to the Holloway Commission against the disadvantages of segregated education accorded with that of the universities and other participating liberal institutions.³¹⁸ It argued that the introduction of parallel classes at existing institutions or the construction of one new black university had serious financial and human resources implications for both the state and university authorities and staff. Drawing on the experiences of segregated higher education in both the American South and South Africa, it argued that even the best endowed institutions were chronically underfunded, failed to attract the best staff and were unable to maintain academic standards. In classic liberal fashion, NUSAS argued that segregated institutions deprived students of contact with one another.³¹⁹ On the weight of all the evidence, the Holloway Report tentatively concluded that university apartheid was not practical and proposed that Africans be concentrated at Fort Hare and Natal but that those pursuing specialised post-graduate studies would be exempted from

³¹⁵ M. Beale, 'The evolution of the policy of university apartheid', *The societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries, collected seminar papers* vol. 19 no. 4, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, pp. 83-84.

³¹⁶ BC 586 I.3, M. O' Dowd, 'Statement on Bantu Education Bill', 9.8.1953.

³¹⁷ *SA Student*, March 1951.

³¹⁸ These included the SAIRR, the university councils of Wits, UCT and Natal, the Wits convocation, the Natal Lecturers' Association, representatives of Fort Hare, the UCT SRC and certain students at UCT. Union of South Africa (no number), *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on separate training facilities for Non-Europeans at universities 1953-1954 (Holloway Commission)*, *op. cit.*, p. 18 and annexure.

³¹⁹ BC 586 G1.6(iii)(b), M.C. O' Dowd, 'Memorandum of evidence submitted by the National Union of South African Students to the Commission of Inquiry into the provision of separate facilities for non-Europeans at South African universities. (Evidence)', 21.2.1954, pp. 2, 5, 11-17, 19-20, 22, 24-25.

segregatory measures as would coloured and Indian students.³²⁰ The government delayed the release of the Commission's report probably because, as Beale surmised, its controversial recommendations would only have compounded the bruising NP succession battle which saw the *baasskap*-orientated Transvaal NP leader, J.G. Strijdom take over the reins of the NP and government on the retirement of D.F. Malan in 1955. Even then, the government was slow to respond to the Holloway Report probably because there was no agreement over the meaning of apartheid.³²¹ Churches, social workers, the apartheid think tank, the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs (SABRA), and the Native Affairs Department advocated to differing degrees, total apartheid - the removal to the reserves of all Africans from the urban areas of South Africa. Afrikaner business depended on cheap freely available African labour made cheaper by the presence of a large African population surplus to their requirements and thus the *Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut* promoted a 'practical' apartheid which would not jeopardise the cheap labour supply.³²² The continuation of racially mixed universities and the congregation of ethnically undifferentiated African students at the urban Natal University did not accord with total apartheid and thus probably because of pressure from SABRA and the Department of Native Affairs, Viljoen rejected the Holloway recommendations.³²³

In addition to threats of university apartheid, NUSAS faced new challenges from the left, effectively weakening the united front it was attempting to craft against government university measures. In what was probably a NEUM initiative, but had the backing of both the ANCYL and some within the NIC - the latter including Mac Maharaj and M.J. Naidoo³²⁴ (later a leading member of the United Democratic Front) - the UNNE student body presented a list of its grievances to the 1954 NUSAS congress. As with Fort Hare in 1952, these were related to the limited political role that NUSAS was prepared to play, its Western-aligned foreign policy (discussed later) and significantly considering that Maharaj was in favour of a new separate black student organisation, its unspelled out allegedly 'European... structure'.³²⁵ NUSAS took this indictment seriously as UNNE would be the third black centre to disaffiliate, Hewat having left shortly after Fort Hare.³²⁶ Nonetheless, NUSAS vigorously defended its anti-apartheid record as attested to by its continued opposition to Bantu Education and its participation in the campaign against the Western

³²⁰ *Holloway Commission, op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

³²¹ M. Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

³²² D. Posel, *The making of apartheid 1948-1961: conflict and compromise*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997, pp. 50-58.

³²³ M. Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

³²⁴ BC 586 A2.2, Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 14.1.1956; T. Beard, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

³²⁵ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1954, pp. 10-12; *Advance*, 22.7.1954; *Cape Times*, 7.7.1954; S. Maharaj to *New Age*, 3.11.1956; P. O' Malley, *Shades of difference: Mac Maharaj and the struggle for South Africa*, Viking, New York, 2007, pp. 71-72.

³²⁶ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1952; *Dome* vol. 7 no. 1, 1.4.1953.

Areas Removal Scheme.³²⁷ where this entailed the removal of educational institutions under the Group Areas Act. It upheld its non-racial structure and rejected a racially organised multi-racial body – the interpretation it put on ‘European in structure’,³²⁸ thus implicitly aligning itself with the LP over the Congresses. Although mandated to put forward a case for disaffiliation, UNNE offered to co-host with Bantu Normal College a meeting of all black centres and NUSAS at which the changes required in NUSAS to effect the return of the black centres would be discussed.³²⁹ NUSAS held high hopes for the success of this proposed meeting, a meeting which dictated its attitude towards its participation in the 1955 Congress of the People.

In July 1954, NUSAS like other organisations, was invited to participate in or co-sponsor with the Congress Alliance, a ‘Congress of the People’ – a national convention - which would draw up a ‘Freedom Charter’,³³⁰ a statement of core liberal democratic and moderately socialist principles on which a future non-racial democratic South Africa would be founded.³³¹ The NUSAS executive probably regarded the invitation as unimportant and so delayed its response. However, it was alerted to the fact that the black centres regarded the event as important (a bus load of UNNE students bound for the Congress of the People would be turned back by the police) and NUSAS’s decision regarding participation could sway the soon to be convened UNNE and Bantu Normal College conference either for or against NUSAS.³³² Thus a postal motion proposed by two members of the NUSAS executive who were simultaneously leading members of the NCFS, that NUSAS should not participate in the Congress of the People because it risked both being associated with a political movement and the loss of its membership, was carried overwhelmingly.³³³ Though the Wits SRC voted for non-participation, presumably like the majority for mainly tactical reasons,³³⁴ there was not unanimity on the question. Bob Hepple, chairperson of the Wits SRC and a member of both COD and the NUSAS executive, together with E. Habedi of Bantu Normal College, proposed an amendment that NUSAS participate in the educational proceedings of the Congress. This was defeated overwhelmingly,³³⁵ not surprisingly considering that the radical left bloc was considerably weakened following the temporary tactical defection of the Wits SRC and the disaffiliation of three black centres.

³²⁷ Sophiatown, an African township in Johannesburg was declared white, bull-dozed, its inhabitants removed to Soweto.

³²⁸ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1954, pp. 11, 13, 15, 17.

³²⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 16-17; *SA Student* vol. 20 no. 1, August 1954.

³³⁰ BC 586 T18, National Action Council of the Congress of the People to the Secretary of NUSAS, 5.7.1954.

³³¹ T. Lodge, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.

³³² BC 586 T18, J. Didcott to the NUSAS Executive, 27.9.1954.

³³³ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1955, p. 62; *SA Student* vol. 20 no. 2, March 1955.

³³⁴ Interview with John Didcott, 18.11.1997.

³³⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1955, p. 62; *SA Student* vol. 20 no. 2, March 1955.

NUSAS's response to the Congress of the People was similar to that of the LP's. The LP had initially agreed to participate fully in the event. Against the wishes of its more radical social democratic Transvaal division, the party withdrew entirely because of fears that COD, which many anti-communist LP members viewed as a communist front, had acquired undue influence over proceedings. Like NUSAS, it also underestimated the future historical and mythical significance of the Congress of the People and felt that it was not important enough to warrant splitting the party.³³⁶ It is important to note that John Didcott, the 1954-5 NUSAS president, in his capacity as a Cape LP member was part of a LP delegation which attempted to persuade the ANC to abandon the Congress of the People and instead co-host a national convention with the LP.³³⁷ Despite the official absence of NUSAS and the LP, members of the Wits SLA, the Wits Local NUSAS Committee (unofficially) and UCT's Modern World Society were part of the historic gathering at Kliptown, Johannesburg,³³⁸ which on 26 June 1955 adopted the Freedom Charter. This document - a compilation of the 'freedom demands' of those present - became the official policy of the ANC in 1956.³³⁹ At the annual NUSAS congress a week later, a proposal by a socialist member of the UCT SRC that NUSAS endorse the Freedom Charter was lost by ten votes to twenty four,³⁴⁰ probably because NUSAS did not want to be identified with any political organisation and the charter was believed to be vague and had elements of sloganeering.³⁴¹

The struggle between the liberal and radical left regarding a political programme and identification with the extra-parliamentary left occurred against the background of the Cold War and the battle over NUSAS's international policy. The *Confederation Internationale Etudiants* (CIE) to which NUSAS joined in 1926 became factionalised and Nazi-ridden resulting in the disaffiliation of most of its member unions,³⁴² NUSAS included, in 1932. Breaking out of its long international isolation and being part of a new post-War democratic student world order was thus important to the post-War NUSAS. Accordingly the NUSAS president, Arnold Klopper, attended an International Student Congress in Prague in

³³⁶ D. Everatt, *The origins of non-racialism: white opposition to apartheid in the 1950s*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 2009, pp. 180-183, 191-194; D. Irvine, 'The Liberal Party, 1953-1956', J. Butler et al. (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 127-128; R. Vigne, *A history of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 1953-1968*, MacMillan and St Martin's Press, Houndsmill and New York, 1997, pp. 44-52.

³³⁷ R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

³³⁸ Interview with Neville Rubin, 4.4.1997; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 7 no. 5, 15.8.1955; F. Tobias, *op. cit.*, p. 50; J. Lazerson, *Against the tide: whites in the struggle against apartheid*, Mayibuye, Bellville, 1994, pp. 96, 173, 188.

³³⁹ T. Lodge, *op. cit.*, pp. 70, 72, 73-74.

³⁴⁰ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1955, pp. 16-17; *New Age*, 21.7.1955.

³⁴¹ Interview with Neville Rubin, 4.4.1997.

³⁴² *SA Student* vol. 20 no. 1, August 1954; E. Ashby and M. Anderson, *The rise of the student estate in Britain*, MacMillan, London, 1970, pp. 61-62, 65; L. Chisholm, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15, 29-31; D. Orlow, *The history of the Nazi Party 1919-1933*, vol. 1, University of Pittsburgh Press, London, 1971, p. 198; D. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: the crisis of classical modernity*, Penguin, London, 1991, p. 226.

November 1945 where he denounced the colour bar in education³⁴³ and with representatives of other student unions helped establish the 'non-political' International Student Federation.³⁴⁴ Initially based in Paris, its headquarters subsequently shifted to Prague because, as the dominant East bloc argued and the other student unions accepted, Czechoslovakia was a bridge between the East and the West and Czech students had resisted Nazism while the French student union had collaborated.³⁴⁵ NUSAS affiliated to the International Students' Federation in 1946³⁴⁶ which shortly thereafter transformed itself into the overtly political International Union of Students (IUS) which espoused radical socio-economic and political rights for students, actively denounced fascism and racism and pledged its support to anti-colonial liberation movements.³⁴⁷

During the communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, students protesting against the overthrow of the elected National Front coalition government were arrested and expelled from the universities. The IUS refused to condemn the actions of the universities and recommended that no sanctions be imposed on them.³⁴⁸ NUSAS felt that events in Czechoslovakia were too distant to pass judgement on.³⁴⁹ Nonetheless it stated its objection to both the 'partisan and political alignment' of the IUS and the organisation's concern with non-student political matters and so claimed the right to dissent from all policy with which it disagreed.³⁵⁰ The reaction of both NUSAS and student unions in Western Europe and the Commonwealth was less accommodating when the IUS 'severed ties' with the Yugoslav National Students Union following the Tito-Stalin showdown and Yugoslavia's expulsion from the *Cominform* in 1948.³⁵¹

The first two serious attempts to end NUSAS's association with the IUS occurred against the background of firstly, the onset of the Cold War and the division of the world into two hostile political, ideological and military camps; secondly, the departure from the universities of ex-service people desperate for student unity and the avoidance of another world war; and thirdly, the growing worldwide anti-communist sentiment signified in South Africa and the United States respectively by the passage of the Suppression of Communism Act and the communist/leftist witch hunt of Joseph McCarthy's Senate

³⁴³ BC 586 W7, International Congress of Students, Prague to NUSAS, 20.8.1945; U2.i(a), Cassim Jadwat to Jimmy Stewart, 10.12.1945; *Wus Views (Special edition)*, 19.2.1946; *SA Student*, March 1946.

³⁴⁴ BC 586 W7, International Congress of Students, Prague to NUSAS, 20.8.1945; *SA Student*, March 1946.

³⁴⁵ J. Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, MacMillan, London, 1996, pp. 88-89, 93-94.

³⁴⁶ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1946, p. 21.

³⁴⁷ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 3 no. 5, 25.6.1951.

³⁴⁸ BC 586 W2, J. Grohman and E. Berlinguer (IUS Secretariat) to NUSAS, 24.6.1951; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 5 no. 7, 17.10.1953; J. Kotek, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-138.

³⁴⁹ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1948, pp. 19-20.

³⁵⁰ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1948, p. 7; B1 Assembly Minutes 1949, p. 35; *SA Student*, May 1949.

³⁵¹ BC 586 W2, IUS, 'Why the IUS has severed relations with the body of the Student Section of the "Peoples' Youth of Yugoslavia", Prague', March 1950; P. Tobias to SRCs and Executive, 'International student affairs (V): IUS Executive meeting, London, February 1950', 9.5.1950, p. 1; J. Kotek, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-156.

Committee of Un-American Activities. In 1950 and 1951, members of the UCT SRC, aligned to the centre of the UP, proposed that NUSAS disaffiliate from the IUS because firstly, the IUS was an overtly political organisation pursuing the aims of communism and secondly, had illegally expelled the Yugoslav student union.³⁵² In the first case the assembly decided to await what it hoped would be a positive outcome of the 1950 World Student Congress before taking a decision.³⁵³ The 1951 disaffiliation motion was lost by eight votes to twenty two and instead NUSAS voted to remain in the IUS for the sake of maintaining world student unity but in so doing would attempt to change the organisation from within.³⁵⁴

The radical-liberal left coalition Wits SRC, strengthened by a mandate from the Wits student body, was implacably opposed to disaffiliation,³⁵⁵ as were the black centres, the latter because of the IUS's strong anti-colonial stance.³⁵⁶ Also in favour of continuing affiliation were the left liberals, traditionally composed of the non-apathetic, politically conscious section of the Wits student body and the powerful minority on the UCT SRC.³⁵⁷ The constitutional crisis and, to a lesser extent, the battery of apartheid legislation of the early 1950s, politicised and liberalised a larger number of English-speaking students and temporarily pushed Rhodes³⁵⁸ and Pietermaritzburg³⁵⁹ into the left liberal camp too. The left liberals were opposed to the division of the student world into hostile ideological camps and while acknowledging that the IUS was communist-dominated, argued that the problem with the organisation was the (mis)treatment of the non-communist minority by the communist majority. It argued further, that like in NUSAS, there was room for all political viewpoints in the IUS, and unity did not necessarily imply unanimity. It also realised that disaffiliation would mean the loss of contact with students in East-Central Europe and Asia.³⁶⁰

By 1953, conditions both within South Africa and abroad had changed. The differences between the liberal and radical left became more marked, particularly as far as liberal anti-communism was concerned and as mentioned earlier, became organisationally fixed by

³⁵² BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1950, pp. 29-30; 1951, pp. 46-48; *Cape Times*, 17.7.1950; *Star*, 12.7.1951, *Nux* no. 7, 16.8.1951; *SA Student* vol. 15 no. 4, August 1951.

³⁵³ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1950, pp. 29-30; *Cape Times*, 17.7.1950.

³⁵⁴ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1951, pp. 46-48; *Nux* no. 7, 16.8.1951; *SA Student* vol. 15 no. 4, August 1951.

³⁵⁵ BC 586 W2, Lionel Forman, 'IUS Council Warsaw, August 31st-September 6th, 1951, Report of the NUSAS delegation to the IUS Council', p. 1; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 2 no. 9, 24.8.1950; vol. 3 no. 1, 12.3.1951; no. 2, 6.4.1951, no. 4, May 1951; no. 5, 25.6.1951.

³⁵⁶ *Nux* no. 6, 25.6.1951; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 3 no. 5, 25.6.1951.

³⁵⁷ The 'minority group' on the UCT SRC had unsuccessfully attempted to have the social colour bar lifted in 1951.

³⁵⁸ *Rhodeo*, 26.5.1951.

³⁵⁹ *Nux* no. 6, 25.6.1951.

³⁶⁰ BC 586 W2, P. Tobias to the Executive, 'IUS', 10.5.1950, pp. 1-3; Interview with Phillip Tobias, 4.12.1997.

the end of the year. As importantly, a 'non-policy making' Co-ordinating Secretariat (COSEC) was inaugurated in 1952 to administer the 'International Student Conferences' (ISCs) held annually by Western student unions since 1950. COSEC was secretly championed and funded by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) which planted its personnel (attached to the National Student Association of the USA) in the secretariat's Leiden headquarters.³⁶¹

In 1953, UCT and Rhodes proposed that NUSAS leave the IUS for the same reasons as before. Each side had researched and prepared their arguments and gathered their troops months prior to the bitter, often personal, mud-slinging twenty two hour marathon assembly debate. Wits, UNNE and the Transvaal Pharmaceutical Students Association attempted to answer the UCT-Rhodes indictment. Using NUSAS as an analogy they argued that students remained within NUSAS even though they disagreed about the extent to which it should oppose apartheid and accordingly there was unlikely to be agreement within the IUS about how political it ought to be. Moving onto stronger ground it averred that should NUSAS leave the IUS because it was too political, it would have no grounds to expect the black centres to remain in NUSAS, or, in the case of Fort Hare and Hewat, re-affiliate. When it became clear that disaffiliation would succeed, Wits and UNNE attempted to persuade the waverers and their former liberal-left allies to support their proposal for a postponement until after the next World Student Congress which they believed held great promise for world student unity. This was defeated and the assembly voted twenty four to sixteen for disaffiliation from the IUS – the last 'Western' union to leave - and by the same number for participation in the ISC and COSEC.

UNNE gave notice of its intention to disaffiliate and with Wits dissociated itself from both decisions. The Wits SRC remained a member of the IUS and with the SLA, SAUDS and the NUSAS Local Committee continued uncompromisingly to oppose apartheid both on and off the campus. It demanded the removal of the racial quota secretly introduced at the Medical School in 1953 and likewise in 1954 mounted a successful boycott of the Great Hall when segregation was suddenly imposed there too.³⁶²

An ugly atmosphere pervaded the 1954 NUSAS congress. Wits was determined to overturn the disaffiliation motion, UNNE was on the verge of leaving³⁶³ and there was talk

³⁶¹ K. Paget, 'From Stockholm to Leiden: the CIA's role in the formation of the International Student Conference', G. Scott-Smith and H. Krabbendam (eds), *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe 1945-1960*, Frank Cass, London and Portland, 2003, pp. 149-157.

³⁶² *Witwatersrand Student (Special Edition)*, 6.3.1953; vol. 7 no. 1, 9.3.1953; no. 3, 20.3.1953; *SA Student* vol. 19 no. 2, May 1954; B. Murray, *Wits, the 'open' years*, *op. cit.*, pp. 298-299.

³⁶³ *Advance*, 22.7.1954; *Nux* no. 4, 23.8.1954; *SA Student* vol. 20 no. 1, August 1954.

of Wits doing so too.³⁶⁴ The Soviet policy of 'peaceful co-existence' which followed the death of Stalin eased international tension and as predicted by the pro-affiliation group the previous year, held promise for the normalisation of international student relations too.³⁶⁵ Like the Soviet Union, the IUS tentatively reached out to its Yugoslav counterparts³⁶⁶ and offered fraternal membership to those outside the IUS,³⁶⁷ an offer taken up by the British and Israeli national student unions.³⁶⁸ Accordingly, Didcott, leading LP member, chief protagonist for disaffiliation and president of NUSAS hammered out a 'bi-partisan' international policy with Dan Goldstein, president of the Wits SRC, whereby NUSAS increased its participation in COSEC and applied for associate membership of the IUS. This was adopted unanimously.³⁶⁹ The terms of the associate membership agreement negotiated by Hepple at the Moscow World Student Congress dissociated NUSAS from all IUS policy, ensured that the IUS took no action regarding events in South Africa and allowed for NUSAS's vetting of all print on South Africa destined for IUS publications.³⁷⁰

In the context of its increasingly vulnerable position in communist-phobic apartheid South Africa, NUSAS could not afford its association with the East bloc. NUSAS was under increased pressure from the NP. The imposition of university apartheid remained on the government agenda, NUSAS's mail was being opened, including a letter from the IUS, and IUS publications were banned.³⁷¹ Without warning then, leading members of the LP at UCT proposed that NUSAS disaffiliate from the IUS as it had not published to NUSAS's satisfaction the terms of its dissociation from IUS policy, had dubious sources of income, had communist political aims and because of the hostile South African environment in which it found itself, NUSAS could not afford to be seen consorting with such 'unsavoury' bodies. The left countered that COSEC too had suspicious sources of funding, the omissions in the published dissociation of policy agreement were trivial, the IUS's political communist orientation was irrelevant as NUSAS had dissociated from its policy and

³⁶⁴ Interview with Neville Rubin, 4.4.1997.

³⁶⁵ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1953, pp. 66, 67, 77; *Advance*, 23.7.1953; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 5 no. 6, 6.8.1953.

³⁶⁶ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1953/4, p. 25.

³⁶⁷ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1954, Annexure 15, 'Appeal of the International Union of Students', p. 100.

³⁶⁸ *World Student News* vol. 8 no. 1, 1954, p. 4.

³⁶⁹ *Advance*, 22.7.1954; *Nux* no. 4, 23.8.1954; *SA Student* vol. 20 no. 1, August 1954.

³⁷⁰ BC 586 W2, Jiri Pelikan and Bob Hepple, 'Associate membership agreement between the National Union of South African Students and the IUS', nd., np. ? Moscow, August 1954; L. Dingle, 'Conversations with Professor Sir Bob Hepple first interview: South Africa (1934-1963), 21 August 2007', The Squire Law Library and Faculty of Law, Cambridge University,

http://www.squire.law.cam.ac.uk/Media/Eminent%20scholars%20Transcripts/hepple_first_interview.pdf
accessed 20.8.2012.

³⁷¹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1955, pp. 50-51; B3 Executive Minutes 1954, p. 9; *Werda* part 1, April 1955.

harking back to previous reasons for remaining in the IUS, stated its belief in 'unity without unanimity'.³⁷²

In what probably won the waverers over, the NUSAS president argued that the terms 'unity', 'contact' and 'co-operation' were confused.³⁷³ Spelling this out in more detail after the congress, he argued that as a liberal humanist organisation which attached great importance to notions of academic freedom and the independence of education from the state, NUSAS could not seek unity with a body like the IUS which did not.³⁷⁴ With the disaffiliation of three black centres and reluctantly, the Transvaal Pharmaceutical Students Association too, the pro-IUS grouping was reduced to Bantu Normal College, Wits and some mandated UCT votes and a few radicals on the NUSAS executive. Students at Pius the Twelfth in Basutoland were influenced by the strong anti-communist line of both the Catholic Church³⁷⁵ and their Catholic university authorities and were assiduously courted by NUSAS-NCFS activists into the anti-IUS camp.³⁷⁶ Disaffiliation from the IUS and full membership of COSEC was carried twenty three votes to fourteen. Dan Goldstein resigned the NUSAS vice-presidency in protest against the breach of faith of the liberals.³⁷⁷ The radical left put up no candidates for the NUSAS executive³⁷⁸ allowing it for the first time to be entirely captured by liberals, some of whom were members of the NCFS and/or LP.³⁷⁹

The Wits SRC and Local Committee dissociated from NUSAS's new international policy³⁸⁰ but their days as powerful campus forces were coming to an end. In an attempt to break the hold of the radical left in student affairs, the Wits University Council resolved to subordinate student government to its authority by imposing a new constitution on the Wits SRC. The student body and the radical SRC fought tooth and nail against this measure.³⁸¹ The SRC reconstituted itself off-campus as the Wits University Students' Association and urged a boycott of the elections to the Council SRC, a decision it reversed at the last minute.³⁸² An organised liberal constituency within the NCFS exposed the duplicity of the radical left in standing for election to both the statutory Council SRC and the unofficial non-collaborating Wits University Students Association.³⁸³ Thus in addition to the new

³⁷² BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1955, pp. 31-39; *SA Student* vol. 21 no. 1, August 1955.

³⁷³ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1955, pp. 37-38.

³⁷⁴ *SA Student* vol. 21 no. 1, August 1955.

³⁷⁵ J. Kotek, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

³⁷⁶ Interview with Clodagh O' Dowd, 2.4.1997.

³⁷⁷ *SA Student* vol. 21 no. 1, August 1955.

³⁷⁸ Interview with Neville Rubin, 4.4.1997.

³⁷⁹ A. Egan, *The politics of a South African Catholic student movement, op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

³⁸⁰ BC 586 O6.1, Wits SRC Minutes, 9.8.1955; O6.2, Minutes of the Local NUSAS Committee, 25.8.1955.

³⁸¹ *Rand Daily Mail*, 2.7.1955

³⁸² BC 586 O6.1, Minutes of the Wits SRC, 9.8.1955; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 7 no. 4, 11.8.1955; no. 5, 15.8.1955; *SA Student* vol. 21 no. 2, May 1956.

³⁸³ A. Egan, *The politics of a South African Catholic student movement, op. cit.*, p. 11; M. Legassick, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

constitutional dispensation, this was probably another reason for the eclipse of the radical left in Wits student politics and their reduction to just four members on the new Council SRC. This new SRC was composed of liberals (some of them Catholic) and a large number of apolitical, non-political and/or cautiously liberal faculty representatives³⁸⁴ and one government spy.³⁸⁵ It wrested control of the student press from the radical left³⁸⁶ for a time, but was less successful in doing so with the NUSAS Local Committee.

Conclusion

By the end of 1955, NUSAS was under the control of the liberal left, a liberal left which adhered to liberal humanistic values and freedoms including the separation of education and the state and which moreover, identified strongly with the LP. All NUSAS presidents between 1954 and 1965 were to differing degrees, active members of the LP. However, NUSAS was effectively an all-white organisation, little different in composition to that of 1945 before the affiliation of Fort Hare. The opening of NUSAS to black students led to the disaffiliation of the majority of NUSAS's white membership who were not prepared to accept either the new liberal and even radical policy of NUSAS or the jettisoning of segregation and a broad white South Africanism which black participation in practice entailed. The election victory of the NP in 1948 had contradictory results for NUSAS. It united students against the threat of university apartheid and brought back to NUSAS its conservative student base, which faced with an exclusive Afrikaner nationalism was either disabused of its dream of the construction of a white South African nation or felt that the rights and privileges of English-speaking whites were under threat. More importantly, the change of government led to the radicalisation of NUSAS's black and radical white membership who demanded that the national union adopt an overtly political anti-apartheid programme. This conflict over the degree to which NUSAS could indulge in political activities was exacerbated by the Cold War. Thus, the restructuring of NUSAS as a student trade union and federation of SRCs under the slogan of 'unity without uniformity' or 'unanimity' was successful in bringing back and retaining within NUSAS its conservative student base, but, in the face of the onslaughts of the apartheid government and to a lesser extent the Cold War, was not able to retain its black membership. Only when the legislation of university apartheid became an incontrovertible reality in the later 1950s did the black centres return to NUSAS. This will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

³⁸⁴ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1955, p. 3.

³⁸⁵ *Sunday Times*, 15.12.1959. It cannot then be ruled out that the security police also played a role in destroying the Wits radical left and generally sowing dissension on the campus between the liberal and radical left.

³⁸⁶ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1955, p. 3.

CHAPTER THREE

The academic freedom campaign, the re-affiliation of Fort Hare and the adoption of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1956-1957

Introduction

The liberal leadership which took control of NUSAS in July 1955 was freed from the divisive debates about international affiliations but faced far more serious domestic challenges. The first was how to confront the looming spectre of university apartheid and the second was how to substantiate its claim, particularly in respect of opposing racially separated higher education to be a national union of South African students when it effectively represented only white students at the predominantly English-medium universities. With the tabling in parliament of the Separate University Education Bill which provided for *inter alia* the transfer of the University College of Fort Hare to the state, the Fort Hare student body re-affiliated to NUSAS, their five year absence precipitated by the national union's earlier refusal to pursue an all-embracing anti-apartheid policy. To accommodate Fort Hare and win back other black centres, as well as to allow it the space to indulge in political activity outside the strictly educational field, the 'non-political' NUSAS adopted the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights as its guiding principles. As constitutional methods of protest against government intentions seemed to offer ever diminishing prospects of success, NUSAS, like other organisations, adopted more radical tactics such as protest marches and even gave its tacit approval to student strikes. The threat posed by the 'church clause' of the Native Laws Amendment Bill to the continued existence of the multi-racial NUSAS led to a decision to defy the provisions of the Bill upon its enactment and to co-operate in a limited way with overtly political organisations such as the ANC, hitherto regarded by the liberal NUSAS leadership as too radical and closely tied to the banned CPSA to risk an association. This chapter will examine and evaluate the success of NUSAS's attempt to build a broad-based university-wide and even off-campus united front against government plans to segregate the universities. Further, it will explain how NUSAS's 'united front' tactic coincided with the 'united front' tactic of the ANC and Congress Alliance. This then facilitated the return of Fort Hare to NUSAS and brought NUSAS closer to the extra-parliamentary left, leading, for example, to the national union's participation in the historic conference on apartheid in December 1957 endorsed by the ANC but held under the auspices of the Interdenominational African Ministers' Federation (IDAMF).

Apartheid and the creation of a 'united front'

The state's response to popular militancy in the first part of the 1950s had severely weakened the ANC by 1956. Black resistance was met with further state repression in the form of bannings and the enactment of security legislation such as the Public Safety Act. The extension and entrenchment of apartheid continued, illustrated by, for example, the implementation of Bantu Education and the introduction of passes for African women.

The accession to the premiership of Transvaal NP leader, J.G. Strijdom boded ill for the black majority. An arch republican, Strijdom was committed to white *baasskap* (overlordship) and, moreover, quite prepared to forego constitutional niceties in order to achieve his aims, such as in the disenfranchisement of the coloured population achieved by packing the Senate and Supreme Court. The increased importance of the Native Affairs Department headed by the mighty apartheid ideologue, H.F. Verwoerd, Strijdom's chief backer against the more moderate N.C. Havenga in the NP succession battle which followed Malan's retirement,¹ was equally disquieting.

In addition, the ANC itself was riven with internal conflict. The radical African nationalists objected to their organisation's tactical working relationship with the multi-racial Congress Alliance which in their opinion resulted in other races subverting ANC policy and diluting or replacing African nationalism with foreign ideologies like communism.² This was exacerbated in 1956 with the adoption of the Freedom Charter as the foundation of ANC policy, thus pointing the organisation in a more explicitly multi-racial direction and further away from militant African nationalism. Finally, in December 1956, almost the entire leadership of the ANC and Congress Alliance was arrested for treason, the resulting five year trial based on *inter alia*, the charge that the Freedom Charter was a revolutionary communist document. The cumulative effect of all of this was that the ANC found itself seriously weakened by 1956. It accordingly 'amended its militant African nationalism' and committed itself to building a united front of all those opposed to apartheid,³ which could even include some within the NP camp.

The Treason Trial arrests brought the LP closer to the ANC, the former being party to the establishment of the Treason Trial Defence Fund, eventually a vast London-based

¹ E. Walker, *A history of Southern Africa*, Longmans, Green and Co, London, 1962, pp. 921-924; T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history*, MacMillan, Houndsmill, 1992, p. 342; D. O' Meara, *Forty lost years: the apartheid state and the politics of the National Party, 1948-1994*, Ohio University Press and Ravan, Athens and Randburg, 1996, pp. 89-91.

² T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1983, pp. 71, 72, 74, 81, 83.

³ D. Everatt, 'The politics of non-racialism: white opposition to apartheid, 1945-1960', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1990, p. 226.

operation funding political trialists over the following three decades.⁴ For COD, like its alliance partners, the arrests and other security measures meant the paralysis of its current leadership. A new, younger generation of leaders, often less ideologically radical than their predecessors, embraced the 'united front' and not without reservations sought alliances with the LP's equally reluctant membership.⁵

Other possible participants in the Congress Alliance's united front included a distinctly liberal wing within the UP. This was increasingly at odds with its party's cautious and vacillating policy aimed at maintaining organisational cohesion in the face of its deep political and social divisions. Within the NP's apartheid think-tank, SABRA, academics and churchmen expressed their uneasiness about the unjust and expedient manner in which apartheid was being implemented. In Natal, the UFP was ploughing its own separatist and imperialist furrow within a conservative, liberal framework while its close associate, the rapidly growing, secessionist Anti-Republican League (ARL) was broadcasting its militant, subversive, anti-Afrikaans, pro-British Freedom Radio nationwide by 1956.⁶ The ARL was formed in 1955 by Natal English-speakers who feared that Strijdom would unilaterally impose a republic on South Africa. In so doing, the 1910 'compact', the terms under which Natal entered the Union of South Africa would be broken, entitling Natal to secede. Through mass rallies and unconstitutional appeals to the British crown (some even supported violence), the ARL demanded a separate referendum on the republican issue for Natal.⁷

Also on the extra-parliamentary front was the 'Black Sash'. The Black Sash or 'Women's Defence of the Constitution League' was initially formed in 1955 to protect civil rights and parliamentary democracy such as the constitutional enshrinement of the coloured franchise. But by 1956 it had mutated into a far broader anti-apartheid movement. Its all-female members, donning their distinctive black sashes 'haunted' cabinet ministers embarking from aeroplanes and trains and staged silent protests outside parliament against apartheid measures.⁸ As far as additional members of a united front were

⁴ J. Robertson, *Liberalism in South Africa, 1948-1963*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971, pp. 179, 181-183; R. Vigne, *Liberals against apartheid: a history of the Liberal Party in South Africa*, MacMillan and St Martin's, Houndsmill and New York, 1997, pp. 85, 87-89.

⁵ J. Lazerson, *Against the tide: whites in the struggle against apartheid*, Westview and Mayibuye, Boulder and Bellville, 1994, p. 197.

⁶ M. Coghlan, 'The Horticulturalists, Freedom Radio and the Erase Erasmus Society', *Natalia* vol. 25, 1995; B.L. Reid, 'The Anti-Republican League of the 1950s', *South African Historical Journal* vol. 14 no. 1, 1982, pp. 89-94.

⁷ B.L. Reid, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-92.

⁸ J. Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-144.

concerned, the ANC could also not but help notice the campaign against university apartheid being waged by NUSAS and the universities from 1956 onwards.

NUSAS's conception of a university, academic freedom and university autonomy

Within the context of debates in 1954-5 regarding both NUSAS's continuing affiliation to the IUS as well as white student unity, liberals had embarked on much soul searching as to why they could not 'achieve unity' with students in either the Eastern-aligned IUS or at the Afrikaans-medium universities and came to the conclusion that liberals, Marxists and Afrikaner nationalists had entirely different understandings of education and the university. This examination resulted in a more detailed, more sharply focussed and specifically liberal exposition of university education, academic freedom and university autonomy than hitherto ventured.

Like the English-medium South African universities discussed in chapter two, NUSAS had a Western understanding of the nature of a university and thus a Western understanding of the function of a university, the relationship between the state and the university and the concepts of university autonomy and academic freedom. NUSAS argued that the function of a university in Western society was corporate devotion to the 'search for truth'.⁹ As such then, 'academic freedom' meant 'freedom for the truth'.¹⁰ By convention in 'non-autocratic Western societies, universities assumed the right to decide independently their method of searching for the truth. Thus, 'universities ... claimed autonomy in regard to [the] admission of students, the appointment of staff, ... the subject matter taught',¹¹ and 'how it was taught'. In other words, NUSAS liberals in 1955/6 reasserted 'the four essential freedoms' of a university enunciated by T.B. Davie, principal of UCT, which underpinned NUSAS's first campaign against university apartheid initiated by Tobias in 1949/50. The university was free to seek the truth even if in the process this clashed with the political party in power.¹² NUSAS argued that 'the governmental system and the university [were] both component parts of the state, each acting in its own sphere'.¹³ As such then, NUSAS denied the government the right either to decide the methods by which the university sought the truth, or, define the 'true function' of a university.¹⁴ Moreover, in a multi-racial society, the pursuit of the truth could only occur in an environment where all races and cultures were represented, hence 'academic non-segregation' as it was practiced at the

⁹ E. Wentzel, 'Academic Freedom', *SA Student* vol. 21 no. 2, May 1956, p. 6.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *SA Student* vol. 22 no. 2, April 1957.

¹³ E. Wentzel, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*

'open' universities of Wits and UCT. However, in the defence of university autonomy, NUSAS upheld the right of racially segregated institutions to remain segregated.

This Western, liberal conception of the university contrasted sharply with the NP belief that the university was there to serve the *volk* and that the university could not pursue interests in opposition to those of the *volk* and its government, discussed in chapter two. For liberals this had totalitarian implications.¹⁵ NUSAS frequently compared South African government policy to that of the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. Within the specific context of apartheid education, NUSAS believed that Western civilisation and Western education were 'the inheritance of all' and thus rejected entirely the apartheid education principle that different races required different educational systems. Moreover, NUSAS believed that education was 'above party politics' and so denounced government intervention in education as 'party political interference'. Its own opposition to 'party political interference' in the universities was justified in terms of serving the interests of its student membership and was not to be equated with the government's foray into 'party politics'.¹⁶

The Interdepartmental (Van der Walt) Commission

The reprieve to the universities offered by the findings of the long-awaited Report of the Holloway Commission that university apartheid was impractical, came to an end with the rejection of the report by the government in May 1955.¹⁷ Later that year an Interdepartmental Commission was appointed and tasked with procuring further information with regard to the financing and construction of five separate ethnic universities. These would include two new institutions in the Western Cape and Durban for coloured and Indian students respectively, the transformation of Fort Hare into an ethno-linguistic Xhosa institution under state control, the establishment of an ethno-linguistic Zulu university college in Natal and for those Africans not from the Eastern Cape and Natal, another in the Northern Transvaal.¹⁸ These terms of reference flowed from the submission of the Department of Native Affairs to the Holloway Commission presented by W.M. Eiselen, the architect of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. The Native Affairs Department's submission, intended to extend Bantu Education and direct government control to African higher education, was rejected by the Holloway Commission as impractical and too

¹⁵ J. Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-135.

¹⁶ *Rand Daily Mail*, 12.7.1949.

¹⁷ Union of South Africa (no UG no.), *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on separate training facilities for non-Europeans at universities 1953-4 (Holloway Commission)*, Government Printer, Pretoria, 1954; M. Beale, 'Apartheid and University Education, 1948-1959', MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1994, p. 107.

¹⁸ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1955-1956*, South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1956, p. 204.

expensive.¹⁹ Eiselen, as Secretary of Native Affairs, was appointed to serve on the Interdepartmental Commission (or Van der Walt Commission) together with H.S. van der Walt, Secretary of Education, D.H. Steyn, Secretary of Finance and I.D. du Plessis, Secretary for Coloured Affairs. I.D. du Plessis was a distinguished Afrikaans *Dertigers* poet and academic who was partially responsible for casting the Cape Malay people as a separate ethnic group in South Africa: Afrikaans-speaking and closely connected to, but separate from the dominant white population of South Africa.²⁰

Beale has argued that the appointment of the Interdepartmental Commission revealed that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science was no longer to be the sole arbiter of the form and direction of higher education policy and that significant responsibility for this had been assumed by the Department of Native Affairs. Moreover, the commission's appointment signified 'a shift from relatively open-minded investigation and decision-making to a more driven, ideological approach that ignored dissenting views and warning voices'.²¹ Adding to this incipient authoritarianism, the Van der Walt Commission was devised as an internal investigation which allowed for no public submissions, either sympathetic or opposed to university apartheid, Verwoerd apparently having become 'scornful of the tradition of public commissions of enquiry'.²²

How did NUSAS respond to the establishment of the Van der Walt Commission and how well did the leadership gauge the changed political landscape? Didcott, the immediate past president of NUSAS (later a constitutional court judge) was 'astounded' by the appointment of the commission. His immediate presidential predecessors, Patricia Arnett and Michael O'Dowd, naively believed that as a consequence of this new development, university apartheid would be temporarily shelved, as anything produced by Eiselen would be too impractical to implement.²³ Ernie Wentzel, the current president (a former member of the Torch Commando, a leading member of the LP and later a human rights lawyer) was not so optimistic, fearing that the 'presence of fanatics like Werner Eiselen and I.D. du Plessis on the new commission suggest[ed] that the government [was] prepared to push ahead with this quite fantastic plan' which he remembered, had earlier been rejected by the Holloway Commission.²⁴ The current leadership also realised that 'other counsels in the [National] Party ha[d] prevailed' and that Viljoen's 1951 assurance that the government

¹⁹ M. Beale, *op. cit.*, pp. 100, 106.

²⁰ A. Zegeye, 'A matter of colour', A. Zegeye and R. Harris (eds), *Media, identity and the public sphere in post-apartheid South Africa*, Koninklijke Brill, Leiden, 2003, pp. 94-95.

²¹ M. Beale, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-109.

²² *ibid.*, p. 109.

²³ BC 586 A2.3, J. Didcott to Ros (Traub), Tofka (Katz) and Ernie (Wentzel), 8.11.1955.

²⁴ BC 586 A2.3, E. Wentzel to J. Didcott, 28.11.1955.

would not legislate university apartheid would not be honoured.²⁵ With the sudden death of T.B. Davie, who had championed the cause of the 'open universities' since the 1940s, NUSAS became even more fearful that 'the government would go full steam ahead [with university apartheid] knowing that [Davie would] not [be] there to shoot them down with his logic and clear reasoning'.²⁶

Publicly, NUSAS responded to these new government developments with a controversial and strongly worded letter to the Minister of Education, Arts and Science which was later released to the press. The Van der Walt Commission was denounced as 'a commission of bureaucrats [which] gives but some respectability to a plan for apartheid which we know has no foundation in practicality and morals'.²⁷ The commissioners themselves were dismissed as mere civil servants who were neither economists nor educationists, who were pledged to do the bidding of the government and institute apartheid.²⁸ NUSAS decided against submitting evidence to the commission partly because it did not wish to be associated with it, but also because the terms of reference (the financial aspects of establishing separate universities) were outside the national union's expertise.²⁹

When the new academic year opened in February 1956, the SRCs at the affiliated NUSAS campuses, either on their own initiative or at the prompting of NUSAS which was beginning to re-launch its academic freedom campaign, reacted to looming university apartheid. The responses of the student bodies at the various universities will be described in a fair amount of detail so as to highlight their different preoccupations and political cultures.

At UCT, the academic freedom campaign faced significant opposition from some sections of the student body and members of the SRC.³⁰ It could be surmised that many students felt that the campaign was firstly a foray into party politics and secondly, the UP, supported by the majority of students, had not yet taken a stand on university apartheid. So as to appease this conservative grouping and win as much support as possible,³¹ the SRC under the chairmanship of NUSAS executive member, Neville Rubin, rejected university

²⁵ SA Student vol. 21 no. 2, May 1956.

²⁶ BC 586 A2.3, na.(?) R. Traub to John (Didcott), 15.12.1955.

²⁷ BC 586 B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 13.3.1956.

²⁸ BC 586 Academic Freedom File, N. Rubin to the Minister of Education, Arts and Science, 29.2.1956.

²⁹ BC 586 B4.1, Ernie Wentzel to the Executive, 13.3.1956, p. 2. NUSAS had only a very limited period of time in which to prepare its evidence, which was another reason for not contributing. However, as noted earlier this internal investigation allowed for no public contributions at all. M. Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

³⁰ BC 586 A2.3, E. Wentzel to John Didcott, 18.10.1956.

³¹ *ibid.*

apartheid in the most minimal form by voting to defend only university autonomy.³² A mass meeting subsequently confirmed this with an overwhelming majority.³³

Whether the Wits SRC would follow UCT's lead was unclear to NUSAS. There had been little contact between Wits and NUSAS³⁴ following the acrimonious NUSAS congress in 1955 and moreover, the new statutory SRC was intended to be a less politicised structure. Observers at Wits believed that the new SRC was more apathetic than conservative and would be prepared to support a moderate NUSAS academic freedom campaign.³⁵ This analysis proved to be correct as in March 1956, the Wits SRC rejected university segregation and the Van der Walt Commission by an overwhelming majority, pledged itself to defend academic non-segregation and to participate in the Transvaal region of the NUSAS-co-ordinated campaign against government interference in the universities.³⁶ Despite concerns about the reliability of its SRC, the Wits student body remained as implacably opposed to university apartheid as before, voting by six hundred to fifteen to take a strong stand on academic non-segregation.³⁷

For those universities which were segregated, such as Rhodes and Natal, protests against new government plans for higher education followed a different path.

The Rhodes student body³⁸ followed its SRC in rejecting the Van der Walt Commission. It asserted that 'the open universities h[ad] proved an unqualified success' and committed itself to upholding their autonomy.³⁹ However, influential student opinion was more equivocal about the interdepartmental commission and the establishment of separate ethnic universities. An editorial in the student newspaper, *Rhodeo*, argued that mother tongue education envisaged at the ethnic universities was a 'humane' consideration, but impractical to implement. Likewise, the establishment of separate universities and closing off alternative educational opportunities to black students would be 'immoral' until the ethnic institutions were equally endowed.⁴⁰ Another student enquired whether Rhodes students, who would vote to uphold academic non-segregation out of Christian belief,

³² UCT Administration Archives, SRC Minutes, 27.2.1956.

³³ BC 586 B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 23.3.1956.

³⁴ BC 586 O6.1, E. Wentzel to M.J. Kimberly, 27.4.1956.

³⁵ BC 586 A2.3, John Didcott to Ros (Traub), Tofka (Katz) and Ernie (Wentzel), 8.11.1955.

³⁶ BC 586 O6.1, Wits SRC Minutes, 6.3.1956, pp. 2, 5.

³⁷ BC 586 A2.3, na. (?) E. Wentzel to John (Didcott), 7.5.1956.

³⁸ BC 586 B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 28.3.1956.

³⁹ *Rhodeo* vol. 9 no. 1, 22.3.1956.

⁴⁰ Editorial in *Rhodeo* vol. 9 no. 1, 22.3.1956.

would accept the logical outcome of such a policy when 'a few shiny faces' retaining contact with their 'unhygienic kinsmen' share 'our toilet facilities'.⁴¹

Similar objections to social integration, the logical outcome of academic non-segregation, were raised at a student mass meeting held at the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg - UNP) to discuss the opening of post-graduate classes to black students on a non-segregated basis. Somewhat ambiguously as to whether this was acceptable or not, the SRC president and NUSAS vice-president argued that miscegenation was unlikely to occur as 'the vast majority of Non-Europeans wished to preserve their identity just as much did the Europeans'⁴² and that 'in all the years' there had never been a single case of inter-racial marriage at either Wits or UCT. Another argument in favour of partially desegregating the university was one current in NUSAS and other liberal organisations at that time: namely that institutions like Fort Hare with limited inter-racial contact became breeding grounds of a virulent anti-white nationalism which was absent at Wits and UCT.⁴³

The generally more conservative student body at the University of Natal (Durban - UND), which until then, upheld only university autonomy, did not respond immediately to the threat of university apartheid. However, it did endorse a resolution rejecting the prevailing segregation at Natal University which had been carried at the combined Natal University Student Conference on 'Education for a common society' in May 1956.⁴⁴ This conference, organised and largely patronised by students from UNNE, proposed that apartheid should be rejected *in toto*. This went beyond the official NUSAS position which restricted its activities to the educational field and thus only opposed apartheid in education.

The academic freedom campaign

With this injection of support, NUSAS set about reworking and expanding upon its multi-faceted academic freedom and university autonomy campaign. At university level, it envisaged a nation-wide front of all campus constituencies ranging from students, senates, councils and convocations united against university apartheid. It aimed to include itself in what came to be known as 'the open universities campaign' already mounted by the authorities at UCT and Wits. To this end, NUSAS encouraged its executive members to cultivate relationships with 'sympathetic' academic staff at their institutions.⁴⁵ Outside the universities, NUSAS aimed to extend its existing network of sympathetic individuals and

⁴¹ 'Grahamite' to *Rhodeo* vol .9 no. 1, 22.3.1956.

⁴² *Nux* no. 1, 11.4.1956.

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Dome* vol. 10 no. 3, June 1956.

⁴⁵ BC 586 B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 26.7.1956, p. 5.

organisations who publicly campaigned against government interference in higher education. Earlier NUSAS had assembled a group of prominent individuals on the Witwatersrand under the loose leadership of the Bishop Ambrose Reeves of the Anglican dioceses of Johannesburg, who were prepared to lobby for the open universities when asked to do so by NUSAS. In 1956, Peter Storey of the Methodist Church and Christian Council of Churches agreed to issue press statements on university apartheid when necessary. It was hoped that Storey would play the same role in Cape Town as Reeves in Johannesburg and as such the executive attempted to recruit more 'people of standing' to support the campaign.⁴⁶ A year later, NUSAS was to regard 'responsible opinion' and a broad front as critical. Without these, there was the danger that the campaign would be dismissed as just an extremist student affair.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, the main thrust of NUSAS's organisation was directed at its student base. It was envisaged that the campaign would be structured on a regional basis⁴⁸ and to this end, the 1956 NUSAS congress voted to establish 'Standing Committees on University Autonomy' at Wits and UCT.⁴⁹ An 'Academic Freedom Committee' under the control of the SRC and composed of representatives of faculty councils, cultural organisations and even sports' codes was in place at Wits, and by July 1956 had, through a 'barrage of publicity material', put the 'facts of the case before the student body'.⁵⁰ Academic Freedom Committees on other campuses were slower to take-off and most were only setup⁵¹ after the Minister of Education made known that he would respond to the Van der Walt Commission, then being printed, during the budget vote in parliament.⁵² This he did in October 1956 with the announcement that legislation would be introduced in 1957 to create five black university colleges as well as prohibit black students from registering at Wits and UCT.⁵³

This goaded student bodies into action. In September 1956, a mass meeting at Wits overwhelmingly rejected government plans for the open universities and voted to hold a strike, in the hope, widely held in liberal circles, that swift action would stop government legislation. Partly because this would jeopardise their delicate negotiations with the

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 28.3.1956.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 28.2.1957.

⁴⁸ BC 586 O6.1, Wits SRC Minutes, 6.3.1956, p. 5.

⁴⁹ B. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

⁵⁰ *SA Student* vol. 22 no. 1, August 1956, p. 7.

⁵¹ BC 586 O5.1, UCT SRC Minutes, 10.9.1956, p. 5; O5.1, E. Wentzel to Neville (Rubin), 4.3.1957; O3.1, 'Minutes of an SRC meeting held in the Howard College Common Room at 8pm on Thursday, 25 April 1957', p. 1.

⁵² BC 586 B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 9.8.1956.

⁵³ M. Beale, p. 112.

government, the university authorities banned the strike, making it impossible for the statutory SRC, now subservient to the University Council, to be associated with this action. An *ad hoc* body of seven hundred students took responsibility for this one hour stay-away from classes on 19 September 1956.⁵⁴ This set a precedent for other student bodies such as Rhodes and UCT to add the radical boycott tactic,⁵⁵ until then shunned because of its association with the Congresses, to their more constitutional methods of struggle. Probably because it smacked of radicalism, NUSAS decided not to associate itself with the Wits strike.⁵⁶

The UCT SRC also considered holding a strike.⁵⁷ This signified that the fortune of the academic freedom campaign had changed⁵⁸ with opposition no longer confined to the right but extended to those who felt the campaign was not radical enough.⁵⁹ At a mass meeting in October 1956, the student body voted overwhelmingly (only fifteen against)⁶⁰ to uphold university autonomy and pledged itself to 'utilise every possible avenue.... to obtain full public support for the university'.⁶¹ Presumably for tactical reasons, this motion was led by the liberal SRC president, Neville Rubin and his conservative vice-president, Denis Worrall.⁶² Worrall was a political chameleon: he was associated with the PP in 1959 and a member of the NP in the 1970s; in 1987 he stood against his party as an independent and subsequently submerged himself in the Democratic Party, but in 1956, Worrall was, conveniently for NUSAS, a leading member of the Cape UP Youth, assuming its vice-chairpersonship in 1957. The protagonists of the academic freedom campaign hoped that Worrall's association with the UP would convince other UP-aligned students into defending university autonomy, the party itself still having taken no stand on the matter in the face of the ill-health of its leader, J.G.N. Strauss.⁶³ An amendment to the Rubin-Worrall resolution was put forward by NEUM activists, Abdullah (Dullah) Omar, 1980s UDF leader and Minister of Justice in the Mandela government and Neville Alexander, an academic later imprisoned on Robben Island for sabotage. Omar and Alexander argued that a democratic system of education was inseparably linked to the struggle for a democratic South Africa and thus sought to extend the conservative (for the radical NEUM) university autonomy

⁵⁴ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 9 no. 1, 14.3.1957; *New Age*, 27.9.1956.

⁵⁵ BC 586 O5.1, 'Statement by the UCT SRC, 20th September, 1956'; *New Age*, 27.9.1956.

⁵⁶ BC 586 A2.1, E. Wentzel to Neville (Rubin) and Trevor (Coombe), 25.8.1956.

⁵⁷ BC 586 O5.1, 'Statement by the UCT SRC, 20th September, 1956'; *New Age*, 27.9.1956.

⁵⁸ BC 586 A2.3, E. Wentzel to J. Didcott, 18.10.1956; N. Rubin to J. Didcott, 18.10.1956.

⁵⁹ BC 586 A2.3: E. Wentzel to J. Didcott, 18.10.1956.

⁶⁰ BC 586 O5.1, Benjamin Pogrud to 'The Secretary Students' Representative Council', 5.10.1956, pp. 1-2; *NUSAS Newsletter/Nuusbrief*, 29.10.1956; *Varsity* vol. 13 no. 30, 4.10.1956; *New Age*, 11.10.1956.

⁶¹ BC 586 O5.1, Benjamin Pogrud to 'The Secretary Students' Representative Council', 5.10.1956, pp. 1-2; *Varsity* vol. 13 no. 30, 4.10.1956.

⁶² *Varsity* vol. 13 no. 30, 4.10.1956.

⁶³ J. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

position to one of upholding full equality for all in a non-racial educational system. This was overwhelmingly defeated⁶⁴ on tactical grounds by the liberals who claimed to support the contents of the amendment but felt that its adoption would lose the university apartheid campaign much needed moderate student support.⁶⁵

Despite an attempted bid for disaffiliation from NUSAS by conservatives at Pietermaritzburg in August 1956⁶⁶ (discussed in the following chapter), support for the stand of the open universities came from all the SRCs of Natal University.⁶⁷ Students at Durban had difficulty in responding to government interference at Wits and UCT because most of them supported segregation and believed that an association with the open universities' protest signified an entry into party politics. Nonetheless, the student body voiced its strong support of the protests of staff and students at Wits and UCT against government interference in their institutions, but made it clear that as a 'non-political' student body, Durban students would only themselves protest were their university autonomy placed in jeopardy. They further called on all universities, particularly Afrikaans-medium ones, to protect university autonomy.⁶⁸

The SRCs at the Afrikaans universities did not respond to the Durban students' request⁶⁹ but did in November 1956 condemn in the strongest possible terms the Soviet invasion of Hungary and the suppression of student rights there. NUSAS did too, linking the loss of academic freedom in South Africa to the same in Hungary and warning that the passing of the proposed university apartheid Bill opened the door for any future government imposing its ideological will on the universities.⁷⁰ The invasion of Hungary was also an opportunity for NUSAS to reinforce its anti-communist credentials for both its conservative student base and the government while mitigating the effect of this with anti-imperialist rhetoric for the black student left, still largely outside the national union. Thus, NUSAS denounced the crushing of the Hungarian 'struggle' for 'self-determination', 'freedom' and 'students' rights' by 'Russian colonialism'.⁷¹

⁶⁴ BC 586 O5.1, Benjamin Pogrud to 'The Secretary Students' Representative Council', 5.10.1956, p. 2.

⁶⁵ *Varsity* vol. 14 no. 30, 8.10.1957; M. Middelman, 'UCT student reaction to university apartheid legislation 1953-1959', African History II, Research Essay, University of Cape Town, 25 September 1979, pp. 19-20.

⁶⁶ BC 586 A2.3, E. Wentzel to J. Diccott, 22.8.1956; B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 23.8.1956.

⁶⁷ *Nux Crisis Edition*, no. 1, March 1957.

⁶⁸ BC 586 O3.1, 'Minutes of a General Meeting of the Student Body held on Wednesday, 17th October, 1956 at 7.45. p.m. at Howard College'; V.E. Warren-Hansen to E. Wentzel, 12.11.1956, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁹ BC 586 O3.1, V.E. Warren-Hansen to E. Wentzel, 12.11.1956; E. Wentzel to V.E. Warren-Hansen, 17.4.1957.

⁷⁰ BC 586 B4.1, E. Wentzel, 'Statement issued to Cape Times, 23 November 1956'.

⁷¹ BC 586 B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 20.11.1956.

Despite the Hungarian interlude, the academic freedom campaign gathered momentum. By 1957, a united front of students, staff and council at Wits and Cape Town had coalesced into the Wits-initiated 'Open Universities Liaison Committee'. Murray has noted that this level of co-operation between students and staff at Wits was made possible by the administration-driven disempowerment of the Wits SRC in 1955 which ended years of confrontation between the Wits authorities and the radical left; slight changes in the composition of the Wits Council; the increasing liberalisation of the academic staff and the decision by the conservative Wits principal, to delegate responsibility for the university autonomy campaign to a senior member of the Senate, I.D. MacCrone,⁷² a psychologist and committed liberal. The Open Universities Liaison Committee forged ties with Rhodes too, threatened with the loss of Fort Hare, but members of the committee intimated privately to NUSAS that they feared the Rhodes principal might dilute the force of their protest.⁷³ Natal University, as yet unaffected by looming university apartheid, paddled its own boat. E.G. Malherbe, principal of Natal, issued a 'strong plea' for the preservation of university autonomy and the defence of the open universities in his pamphlet, 'Die autonomie van ons universiteite en apartheid'⁷⁴ while at the same time extolling the virtues of the Natal system which for pedagogical reasons he believed was rightly segregated.

In January 1957, the councils of Wits and UCT hosted a conference in Cape Town at which twenty eight eminent academics, educationists and judges defended the claims of the open universities to remain non-segregated. The proceedings were later collated into a publication entitled, 'The open universities in South Africa'.⁷⁵ NUSAS was not officially involved in this conference but lauded it as the dignified 'type of opposition one expects from a university' and perhaps heralding its own adoption of more radical tactics, added that the conference 'was not a militant form of opposition'.⁷⁶ In December 1956, with the help of current and past NUSAS office bearers, the convocations of both Wits and UCT condemned the government's intentions of closing their *alma maters*⁷⁷ and by January their councils, senates and staff associations had too.⁷⁸

⁷² B. Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 290, 303, 305.

⁷³ BC 586 B4.1, 'Report of the Executive Visit paid by Mr Wentzel (President) and Mr Rubin (Vice-Pres. For International Relations) to Rhodes, Grahamstown Training Coll., Fort Hare, Univ. of Natal (Durban European, Non-European, Pietermaritzburg and Medical School) and Natal Training College.', 30.3.1957, p. 1.

⁷⁴ 'The autonomy of our universities and apartheid'; M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1956-7*, p. 198.

⁷⁵ *NUSAS Newsletter/Nuusbrief* no. 4, 11.3.1957, p. 1.

⁷⁶ BC 586 B4.1, Ernie (Wentzel) to the Executive, 19.12.1956.

⁷⁷ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1956-7*, *op. cit.*, p. 197. The NUSAS president Ernie Wentzel chaired the UCT convocation. BC 586 B4.1, Ernie (Wentzel) to the Executive, 19.12.1957. Past-president, Tobias was a prominent Wits alumnus and member of staff and Trevor Coombe played an important role in the University of Natal convocation.

⁷⁸ *Varsity*, 14.3.1957.

The cultivation of outside organisations was also paying off. The South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) issued a statement about the expense and academic inequity of ethnic universities and repeated the liberal mantra that no inter-racial contact bred exclusive nationalism⁷⁹ while the Christian Council (chaired by Storey) passed a resolution condemning the loss of academic freedom.⁸⁰ The LP was all prepared to come on board, but NUSAS delayed this until the UP had taken a position, fearing that the campaign would appear to be a LP one.⁸¹

NUSAS's international campaign was bearing fruit too. The Wits and UCT SRC minutes of this period are strewn with messages of support from student organisations and academic institutions around the world. Even though NUSAS had severed all ties with the International Union of Students (IUS) and the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) and the Wits left were too weak to retain their SRC's official association with them,⁸² the liberal majority on the Wits SRC did reluctantly allow the use of an IUS film during the academic freedom campaign on the campus.⁸³ NUSAS did not. It drew closer to the anti-communist, Leiden-based Co-ordinating Secretariat (COSEC) and its policy-making body, the International Student Conference (ISC). At the Sixth ISC in Ceylon, a number of resolutions condemning university apartheid were passed⁸⁴ which were subsequently placed before the United Nations.⁸⁵

Parliamentary parties and the Separate University Education Bill

On 18 January 1957, the Governor-General announced in his speech from the throne that university apartheid would be enacted during that session of parliament. This was followed on 11 March 1957 by the tabling of the three pronged Separate University Education Bill which coincided with the recommendations of the Department of Native Affairs to the Holloway Commission of 1954. The Bill aimed to establish four separate ethnic universities, those for Africans under the control of the Ministry of Native Affairs. It would transfer to government both Fort Hare and, to the consternation of Natal University, its segregated Medical School too and ultimately remove all black students from UCT and Wits.⁸⁶ Much of the Bill comprised an authoritarian code of conduct for students and staff, the latter to be state-appointed civil servants.⁸⁷ The Bill was soon withdrawn however, as it was found by

⁷⁹ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1956-7*, op. cit., p. 198.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ BC 586 A2.3, E. Wentzel to J. Didcott, 18.10.1956.

⁸² BC 586 O6.1, Wits SRC Minutes, 12.6.1956, p. 5.

⁸³ *ibid.*, 26.11.1956, p. 8.

⁸⁴ *SA Student* vol. 12 no. 2, April 1957.

⁸⁵ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1956-7*, op. cit., p. 205.

⁸⁶ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates*, column 2493, 11.3.1957.

⁸⁷ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1956-7*, op. cit., pp. 199-201.

Albert van de Sandt Centilivres, chancellor of UCT and former chief justice, to be hybrid, affecting both public and private interests.⁸⁸ Thus, an amended version was introduced on 8 April 1957 which omitted Fort Hare and the Natal Medical School⁸⁹ and placed the onus of not enrolling at the open universities on the black students themselves, instead of, as in the withdrawn Bill, on the university authorities.⁹⁰ Thus the government was able to claim that it was not restricting university autonomy, a claim held by NUSAS to be false, because as was the case with the revised Native Laws Amendment Act (to be discussed later), the university (or multi-racial institution) would remain an accessory to the crime.⁹¹ Government claims of respecting university freedom rang hollow in the light of the prime minister's statement a few days earlier that state-aided institutions would not be allowed to teach doctrines undermining Christianity and the existence of the white state.⁹²

How did NUSAS react to these earlier developments? The Academic Freedom Committees on the various campuses which had been making preparations throughout the vacation swung into action. Following the speech from the throne, the NUSAS president co-ordinated a complicated simultaneous exchange of press releases by NUSAS SRCs across the country.⁹³ Despite fears that the timing was wrong as the press was focusing on other matters to be put before parliament,⁹⁴ university apartheid did receive good coverage.⁹⁵ The UP-supporting *Argus* published from the NUSAS and SRC press releases those arguments in accord with its own views and those of its white readership and followed up with an editorial entitled 'Shackling the universities'.⁹⁶ NUSAS was quoted as calling on the public to insist that 'the government ... drop their proposed legislation' as this represented the 'introduction of politics into learning'⁹⁷ while the Wits SRC was 'fear[ful of] the international isolation which will result when we become universities so different from what the rest of the world regards as a true university'.⁹⁸ The more radical and prophetic joint warning of the SRCs of Pietermaritzburg and non-NUSAS-affiliated UNNE that university apartheid was 'no less than a catastrophe for race relations' was also carried⁹⁹ but could be interpreted ambiguously as meaning the two white 'races'.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 201, 204.

⁸⁹ *House of Assembly Debates*, column 4227, 8.4.1957.

⁹⁰ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1956-7*, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

⁹¹ *NUSAS Newsletter/Nuusbrief* no. 6, 25.4.1957.

⁹² *Argus*, 6.4.1957.

⁹³ BC 586 A2.2, Ernie (Wentzel) to Trevor (Coombe), 7.1.1957; Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 16.1.1957; 21.1.1957.

⁹⁴ BC 586 A2.2, Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 21.1.1957.

⁹⁵ *NUSAS Newsletter/Nuusbrief* no. 3, 20.2.1957, p. 1.

⁹⁶ *Argus*, 19.1.1957.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 19.1.1957.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

A few days later, the Minister of Education, Arts and Sciences would accept neither a petition and letter from the SRCs of Wits and UCT respectively nor entertain a request to meet a student deputation to discuss university apartheid.¹⁰⁰ Protest tactics radicalised. In the same manner as the eminently respectable, white, middle-class, liberal Black Sash, which offered to stand outside parliament during the First Reading,¹⁰¹ small groups of students from UCT, Wits and Rhodes, dressed in academic gowns, staged placard protests outside UCT during rush hour denouncing 'political interference with universities' and claiming that 'closed universities mean[t] closed minds'.¹⁰² Later, larger groups were to stand in other parts of the peninsula and outside parliament too.¹⁰³ Similar protests took place in Johannesburg under the auspices of the Wits Academic Freedom Committee and SRC.¹⁰⁴

One of the most important means of halting university apartheid was to persuade the UP to oppose it in parliament. However, by December 1956, the official opposition had yet to formulate its response to this measure and judging by its past record, it was quite possible that it would side with the government. At the UP congress in November 1956, Sir De Villiers Graaff succeeded the absent, ill JGN Strauss as leader of the deeply divided and somewhat directionless party. As an anglicised Afrikaner committed to the British Commonwealth with personal links to the old Boer generals, Loius Botha, Jan Smuts and Barry Hertzog,¹⁰⁵ it was hoped that Graaff would win wide electoral support.¹⁰⁶ This would entail successfully holding together in one party the *bloedsappe* (who stood by the party of Botha and Smuts out of family tradition), 'near Nationalist' conservatives (many of them anglicised, upper class Afrikaners or English jingoists) and liberals.¹⁰⁷ In the face of its 1953 electoral defeat, the exodus of its left wing to the LP and the UFP and the right wing 'Bailey Bekker Group' to the National Conservative Party, the UP either failed to take a decisive stand on 'race' issues for fear of further splitting the party - sometimes finding no agreement even when a bill was before parliament¹⁰⁸ - or simply moved to the right. Thus, in November 1954, it reneged on its pledge to reinstate the coloured franchise were the UP re-elected to government, committed itself to retaining the Mixed Marriages Act as a means

¹⁰⁰ NUSAS Newsletter/Nuusbrief no. 3, 20.2.1957, pp. 1-2; H.M. Kantor to Cape Times, 12.2.1957.

¹⁰¹ BC 586 B4.1, Ernie (Wentzel) to the Executive, 19.12.1956; Die Burger, 13.2.1957.

¹⁰² Argus, 9.2.1957.

¹⁰³ Cape Times, 19.2.1957; Argus, 25.3.1957.

¹⁰⁴ Witwatersrand Student vol. 9 no. 1, March 1957; NUSAS Newsletter/Nuusbrief no. 3, 20.2.1957, p. 1; SA Student vol. 22 no. 2, April 1957.

¹⁰⁵ L. Barnard, 'Sir De Villiers Graaff as political leader of the United Party', L. Barnard and D. Kriek (eds), *Sir De Villiers Graaff*, Digma, Pretoria, c. 1990, pp. 70-72.

¹⁰⁶ J. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

¹⁰⁷ T. Hanf, *South Africa, the prospects of peaceful change*, Rex Collings and David Philip, London and Claremont, 1981, p. 100.

¹⁰⁸ V. Raw, 'Graaff, the parliamentarian and public speaker', L. Barnard and D. Kriek (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 128.

of breeding out miscegenation and rejected the extension of indirect black parliamentary representation.¹⁰⁹ In addition, from 1953 onwards, it usually endorsed the government's new authoritarian security measures such as the Criminal Law Amendment, Public Safety and Suppression of Communism Amendment Acts¹¹⁰ all of which further criminalised protest.

In preparation then for the UP's caucus meeting in January 1957, NUSAS lobbied Zac de Beer, MP for Maitland, and other liberally-inclined MPs to take a strong stand against university apartheid and for this purpose offered to make available to them the national union's academic freedom files.¹¹¹ NUSAS 'made excellent contacts' with Margaret Ballinger and Leo Lovell,¹¹² leaders of the LP and Labour Party respectively, (the latter moving away from its segregatory protection of the white working class to a race policy more liberal than that of the UP's). And, moreover, NUSAS could presumably count on the influence of Labour Party MP, Alex Hepple, and Leslie Rubin, LP Native Representative in the Senate, fathers of former and current Wits and UCT SRC presidents, Bob Hepple and Neville Rubin respectively. Not unexpectedly then, following the speech from the throne, the LP and Labour Parties announced their opposition to proposed university apartheid. The UP however remained mute,¹¹³ precipitating much press speculation as to which way it would vote.¹¹⁴ NUSAS was privately worried about the UP's silence. It feared firstly, that the party would only oppose the proposed Bill in terms of defending university autonomy and secondly, that in response to negative public opinion might change its stance during the Second Reading as it had just done in regard to the 'Flag Bill'¹¹⁵ - a bill aimed at curtailing the official display of the Union Jack in South Africa.¹¹⁶ NUSAS's first concern seems strange in the light of NUSAS's broad-based academic freedom campaign built on tactical alliances with moderate conservatives on the basis of the defence of university autonomy. However, the concern related to the universities which could be embarrassed

¹⁰⁹ E. A. Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 919-920.

¹¹⁰ J. van Lingen, 'Graaff speaks – the formative years', L. Barnard and D. Kriek (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 89.

¹¹¹ BC 586 A2.2, Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 2.1.1956 (sic) (1957); 29.1.1957; Ernie (Wentzel) to Trevor (Coombe), 31.1.1957; B4.1, Ernie (Wentzel) to the Executive, 19.12.1956.

¹¹² BC 586 A2.2, Ernie (Wentzel) to Trevor (Coombe), 31.1.1957.

¹¹³ *Cape Times*, 25.1.1957.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*; 10.2.1957; *Die Vaderland*, 22.1.1957.

¹¹⁵ BC 586 A2.2, 'President' (Ernie Wentzel) to Trevor (Coombe), 7.3.1957, p. 4.

¹¹⁶ This private member's bill was not introduced by the NP (a similar suggestion from the NP caucus was turned down by Dinges because it would arouse too much emotion) but by a conservative English-speaking former UP MP, Arthur Barlow, subsequently a member of the National Conservative Party. B.M. Schoeman, *Parlementere verkiesings in Suid-Afrika 1910-1976*, Aktuele Publikasies, Pretoria, 1977, p. 342. The UP strenuously opposed this measure, in particular Douglas Mitchell, UP Natal leader who believed that it would cause bitterness and harm white relationships. However, it appeared that many other English-speakers supported the Bill and it was eventually passed unopposed by the UP.

were government supporters to raise the issue of miscegenation¹¹⁷ and presumably in addition use miscegenation to shift public opinion against the UP's stand.

To the surprise then of NUSAS, and equally the government, the UP strongly opposed the Separate University Education Bill during its First Reading on 11 March 1957.¹¹⁸ Couched in traditional UP terms but utilising arguments advanced by NUSAS and the open universities, Graaff accused the government of 'giving way to the ideological theories of hon. the Minister of Native Affairs'¹¹⁹ and warned the assembly that the Bill was an attack on 'traditional' academic freedom and university autonomy and 'open[ed] the door' to further state 'interference in the internal policy of the university'.¹²⁰ NUSAS expanded on Graaff's words by arguing that with the enactment of the Bill, black students would 'not receive a true university education but would be trained 'in a government department designed to perpetuate baasskap'.¹²¹ NUSAS warned the public that if it did not 'rally to the support of the universities', South Africa would find itself in the same position as that of Nazi Germany, where the universities capitulated to Nazi control and 'contributed materially to the rapid growth of Nazism'.¹²²

Campus opposition to the Separate University Education Bill

After this, the focus of the academic freedom campaign shifted to the various NUSAS-affiliated campuses. NUSAS believed that its role should be that of 'prod[ding] other bodies to take their rightful prominent place in the apartheid campaign' so as to avoid creating the impression (quite correct) that the national union was 'poking [its] nose in wherever [it] could'.¹²³ Thus, just prior to the announcement of the contents of the Separate University Education Bill, NUSAS requested its executive members to coax statements of opposition to university apartheid from the councils, senates, convocations and SRCs of their respective universities.¹²⁴ The stand taken by the UP lent respectability, moderation and legitimacy to the hitherto perceived left-leaning academic freedom campaign and its foray into party politics. This perhaps persuaded many more within the university community, the majority of whom would have voted for the UP, to leave their ivory towers and participate in the campaign. The next few months witnessed the various constituencies of the universities passing resolutions, circulating petitions, hosting public meetings and organising pickets. This culminated in the hitherto unheard of cancellation of lectures to

¹¹⁷ BC 586 A2.2, 'President' (Ernie Wentzel) to Trevor (Coombe), 7.3.1957, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ *House of Assembly Debates*, columns 2993-2495, 11.3.1957.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, 2993, 11.3.1957.

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, 2494, 11.3.1957.

¹²¹ *Cape Times*, 14.3.1957.

¹²² *ibid.*

¹²³ BC 586 A2.2, 'President' (Ernie Wentzel) to Trevor (Coombe), 18.2.1957.

¹²⁴ BC 586 A2.2, Telegram, 26.2.1957 quoted in Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 27.2.1957.

allow for university council and senate-led mass protest marches through the streets of the various university towns and cities of South Africa.¹²⁵

The *Special Edition* of the *Witwatersrand Student* of March 1957 claimed that Wits was 'a completely united front against apartheid'.¹²⁶ This view was echoed by I.D. MacCrone, co-ordinator of the Wits university autonomy campaign. Did Wits reject all aspects of apartheid or only university apartheid and to what extent was the university a united front? During the 1956/7 vacation, all components of Wits participated in a public meeting on academic non-segregation addressed by the chancellor, Justice Richard Feetham,¹²⁷ who, as Murray noted, was, like his counterpart at UCT, playing a far more prominent role in university affairs than chancellors hitherto.¹²⁸ In February 1957, the NUSAS president proclaimed himself generally 'satisfied' with the campaign in Johannesburg but regretted that the Wits staff was 'not quite as co-operative as it might have been'.¹²⁹ This is not spelt out, but presumably many staff members were wary of taking a 'political stand' even though Sutton, the Wits principal, was at pains to state that the university's opposition to the Bill was 'not political'.¹³⁰ Moreover, an association with what many in the public believed was juvenile, irresponsible student protest, diminished the possibility of avoiding government action. As far as the Wits student body was concerned, a mass meeting rejected overwhelmingly the Separate University Education Bill before parliament and pledged itself 'to defend in every way possible' the 'traditional policy of academic non-segregation maintained' by all constituencies of the university.¹³¹ However, only nine hundred students attended this meeting,¹³² fewer than the thirty percent of the student body generally held to be politically conscientised. This, despite the fact that the UP had already indicated its intention to fight the Bill and students had been exposed to the issue of university apartheid through the 'Academic Freedom Week',¹³³ an annual event introduced by NUSAS some years before.

The Wits student leadership was uneasily united. Despite the defeat of the radical left in 1955, this grouping, organised into a non-racial campus COD branch, made a determined but limited comeback in student politics, Legassick arguing that COD provided the radical left with the platform it had lost in NUSAS. Moreover, playing an active role in LP-

¹²⁵ UCT (Cape Town), Wits (Johannesburg), Rhodes (Grahamstown), Fort Hare (Alice)

¹²⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 9 no. 1, March 1957.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

¹²⁸ B. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

¹²⁹ BC 586 A2.2, Ernie (Wentzel) to Trevor (Coombe), 18.2.1957.

¹³⁰ F. Matthews, *Remembrances*, Mayibuye, Bellville, 1995, pp. 142-3.

¹³¹ *New Age*, 21.3.1957.

¹³² BC 586 O6.1, 'Minutes of the Statutory Annual General Meeting of all students held in the Great Hall at 1pm on Thurs, March 15, 1957'.

¹³³ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 9 no. 1, March 1957.

dominated campus politics was entirely compatible with the Congress Alliance's policy of forging a united front with all anti-apartheid forces. Thus Wits returned to its traditional liberal-left coalition in student politics,¹³⁴ albeit with a far less powerful radical left than in the past. The Wits Academic Freedom Committee was a liberal-COD coalition which generally functioned harmoniously. It was widely representative of student campus societies and sought representation on the Wits Council's Academic Freedom Committee.¹³⁵ The presence of COD members in student governing structures could explain the radical, unconstitutional tactics adopted by Wits students in their efforts to fight university apartheid. Probably influenced by the ANC's Anti-Pass campaign, a 'Burn the Bill' protest was held on the Great Hall steps which was interrupted by war-cry chanting students hurling home-made teargas bombs¹³⁶ and ended in a scuffle when twenty five apartheid supporters tried to save the Bill from the flames.¹³⁷ Following this, counter demonstrations against the academic freedom campaign were led on the campus by S.W. Postma.¹³⁸

With the exception of three NP supporters, the SRC agreed in principle to hold a protest march through Johannesburg,¹³⁹ a decision which won the support of the university-wide Open Universities Liaison Committee.¹⁴⁰ A national student conference hosted by the Wits SRC to discuss university apartheid and attended by representatives of almost all of NUSAS's affiliated SRCs as well as those from Fort Hare and UNNE¹⁴¹ resolved to 'prosecute the most vigorous campaign'¹⁴² against the Separate University Education Bill. This would include the staging of simultaneous protest marches around the country.¹⁴³ On the 22 May 1957, Wits closed for most of the day. With the full permission of the Johannesburg City Council,¹⁴⁴ a three thousand-strong 'united front' of Wits Council members, staff, students and alumni processed from the campus to the Johannesburg City Hall under the watchful eye of the security police.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁴ E. Webster, 'Wit's going on?: revisiting the Makgoba affair', *Southern Africa Report* vol. 13 no. 2, March 1998, <http://www.africafiles.org/article.asp?ID=3813> accessed 7.8.2013.

¹³⁵ BC 586 O6.1, 'Minutes of the Academic Freedom Committee Meeting held on April, 8th, 1957 at 8pm in the SRC office'.

¹³⁶ BC 586 O6.1, 'Annex 13', 'Mr Chairman, Members of Assembly' na., nd.; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 10 no. 10, 13.8.1958.

¹³⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, 30.3.1957.

¹³⁸ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 9 no. 5, 15.4.1957.

¹³⁹ BC 586 O6.1, SRC Minutes, 5.3.1957.

¹⁴⁰ BC 586 O6.1, M. Gunther, 'Report of the SRC Representative to the OULC', 13.5.1957.

¹⁴¹ Durban did not attend. *New Age*, 16.5.1957; *SA Student* vol. 12 no. 3, June 1957.

¹⁴² *New Age*, 16.5.1957.

¹⁴³ BC 586 O6.1 (O.19), M. Gunther, 'Academic Freedom Committee Report, 14 May 1957'.

¹⁴⁴ *Cape Times*, 21.5.1957.

¹⁴⁵ *New Age*, 30.5.1957; *SA Student* vol. 12 no. 3, June 1957.

At UCT, the academic freedom campaign followed a similar course to that of Wits. A special *Academic Freedom Edition* of the student newspaper, *Varsity*, was brought out to coincide with a special mass meeting to protest the introduction of the Separate University Education Bill in parliament. Nearly a third of the UCT student body attended this gathering which was addressed by the SRC and in a precedent-setting move, a member of the UCT Senate too.¹⁴⁶ Shortly after the introduction of the revised Bill in parliament, the UCT convocation, as at Wits, sponsored a public meeting to plead the case of the open universities. This was presided over by Albert van de Sandt Centilivres.¹⁴⁷ Wide prominence had already been given to Centilivres's uncompromising defence of university autonomy and his belief in the importance of the presence of black students at the open universities for the development of good race relations, tolerance and the maintenance of 'western civilisation'.¹⁴⁸ On 7 June 1957, Centilivres led the three thousand-strong UCT protest march up Cape Town's Adderley Street to the university's city campus. Although the student followers of NEUM had refused to participate in the academic freedom campaign because the SRC would not put university apartheid in its 'proper perspective',¹⁴⁹ black students were in evidence scattered amongst the white majority.¹⁵⁰ Also participating in the demonstration as either Medical School staff or alumni were doctors attached to state hospitals. They were later subjected to intimidation by the Cape Provincial Administration.¹⁵¹

The severing of the Natal Medical School from the University of Natal and its proposed transfer to the Native Affairs Department created neither a university-wide nor student united front against the Separate University Education Bill at the geographically scattered and racially and ideologically diverse University of Natal. The vice-president of NUSAS and president of the Pietermaritzburg SRC, Trevor Coombe (a devout Christian and member of the SCA) was unable to accede to NUSAS's request to coax statements from the different constituencies of the university as in his opinion, the University Council was pro-segregation and the Senate held strictly under the thumb of the principal, Malherbe. Eventually however, with the support of the Natal Provincial Council and the Natal Coastal Doctors' Association, both the Senate and Council concurred with the principal that the takeover of the essentially apartheid-organised Medical School was an unnecessary 'act of pillage'.¹⁵² NUSAS played no role in the Medical School controversy because, as

¹⁴⁶ *Argus*, 14.3.1957; *Cape Times*, 14.3.1957; *New Age*, 21.3.1957.

¹⁴⁷ *Cape Times*, 8.5.1957.

¹⁴⁸ *Argus*, 11.2.1957.

¹⁴⁹ *New Age*, 21.3.1957.

¹⁵⁰ *Argus*, 7.6.1957; *Cape Times*, 8.6.1957; *New Age*, 13.6.1957.

¹⁵¹ *Cape Times*, 5.7.1957.

¹⁵² BC 586 A2.2, Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 12.2.1957.

mentioned earlier, it could not afford to be seen as a serial meddler but believed however, that the 'more trouble... stir[red] up in Natal... the better'.¹⁵³

Trouble was indeed stirred up in Natal, but despite the efforts of the bridge-building Coombe and to a lesser extent M.J. Naidoo, president of the non-NUSAS affiliated UNNE SRC, this did not result in a student united front but rather exacerbated the differences between the four Natal campuses. Because the Durban SRC upheld only university autonomy, it was unable to associate itself with either a strong statement against university apartheid issued jointly by UNNE and Pietermaritzburg in February 1957,¹⁵⁴ nor with the ultimately abortive national student protest strike proposed by UNNE.¹⁵⁵ Similarly it declined to participate in pickets in Durban and Pietermaritzburg against government interference in the open universities as this was 'a little to [sic] advanced and a little too public for the UND student body'.¹⁵⁶ However, the Durban student body did move to the left in this period, and after some persuading by the SRC president and the visiting NUSAS executive, ratified the SRC's endorsement of the principle and ideal, but not the practice of academic freedom.¹⁵⁷

Without first informing the rest of the student body or the UNNE SRC of their intentions, the Durban medical students formed an 'Action Committee' to co-ordinate their protest against government plans to take-over their institution.¹⁵⁸ The UNNE SRC,¹⁵⁹ on which the medical students chose not to be represented, unsuccessfully attempted to organise a university-wide demonstration to foster student unity between the divided black campuses. The Medical School would only participate if the demonstration rejected apartheid *in toto* while Durban would if it was limited to university autonomy.¹⁶⁰ Ultimately, the proposed march through Durban by Pietermaritzburg and UNNE was banned by the mayor of Durban because the organisers had failed to obtain permission from the City Council and more

¹⁵³ BC 586 A2.2, 'President' (Ernie Wentzel) to Trevor (Coombe), 18.2.1957.

¹⁵⁴ BC 586 A2.2, Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 7.2.1957; 13.2.1957.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 14.1.1956 (sic) 1957.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 24.2.1957.

¹⁵⁷ BC 586 O3.1, 'Minutes of a General Student Body Meeting held in Howard College Main Hall on Wednesday 27th March, 1957 at 8.0. p.m.', p. 4; A.G. Tsipouras, 'Report of the U.N. (D) SRC for 1957', Annex 11, nd.; Gerald (Boulle) to Trevor (Coombe), 19.10.1957, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ BC 586 A2.2, Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 24.2.1957.

¹⁵⁹ In 1942 students at Sastri College (then the black section of the University of Natal) were allowed one representative on the (white) Durban SRC. In 1945, against the wishes of the student bodies of Pietermaritzburg, Sastri as well as NUSAS, the Senate created three racially segregated SRCs at Pietermaritzburg, Durban (white) and Sastri (black) which would have equal representation on the Joint Student Board of the university college. In 1952 students at the newly established black Medical School refused to be lumped with Sastri in a black SRC and demanded their own. This body, if it came into existence, did not have any representation on the Joint Board. A Medical Students' Council was in existence during the 1950s. C. Larkin, 'Becoming liberal - a history of the National Union of South African Students: 1945-1955', MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2001, pp. 34, 35, 57.

¹⁶⁰ BC 586 A2.2, Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 24.2.1957; O3.1, 'Minutes of a General Student Body Protest Meeting held in Howard College Main Hall on Friday 15th March, 1957 at 1.30. pm.'

ominously in NUSAS's opinion, because the public knew enough about academic freedom, in the opinion of the mayor.¹⁶¹

At UNP, the campus newspaper, *Nux*, urged students to oppose university apartheid and the educational indoctrination which this entailed with the same level of commitment they had displayed in their demonstrations against the invasion of Hungary the previous year.¹⁶² Was this successful? Possibly because the campus was misinformed about the nature of the meeting - it is not clear why nor whether this was intentional - only one hundred and twenty students attended an SRC mass meeting held shortly after the introduction the Separate University Education Bill in March 1957. However, those present did agree to the adoption of a militant programme of action against university apartheid¹⁶³ which included Black Sash-type pickets, petitions, mass meetings and upside down flag flying demonstrations.¹⁶⁴ These were subsequently well patronised.

The UNP university apartheid campaign was not limited only to public group demonstrations. *Nux* exhorted its readers to educate family and friends regarding the distinction between 'personal, voluntary segregation and enforced, unwanted apartheid'. It warned that 'dictatorship' and 'bloodshed' would, like in Nazi Germany 'inevitably' follow were Pietermaritzburg students to refrain from resisting the 'encroachment' on their civil liberties.¹⁶⁵ This Nazi analogy echoed not only the sentiments of NUSAS but also those of the Anti-Republican League (ARL), the largest political organisation in Natal. After the battle to retain the Union Jack and 'God save the queen' had been lost in 1957, the ARL shifted its attention to the deteriorating state of 'race relations' in the Union and defending the liberties of the English universities.¹⁶⁶ NUSAS had no official ties with the extra parliamentary ARL but considered the organisation useful in 'publicising demonstrations and mtgs [sic] amongst [its] considerable membership in Natal'.¹⁶⁷ The chairman of the Pietermaritzburg Academic Freedom Defence Committee was described by the NUSAS executive as a 'useful', 'Federal Party John Bull'¹⁶⁸ and as such was probably associated with the ARL. Using the same tactics as the ARL, Pietermaritzburg students attended and

¹⁶¹ BC 586 A2.2, 'President' (Ernie Wentzel) to Trevor (Coombe), 18.3.1957.

¹⁶² *Nux* no. 1, March 1957.

¹⁶³ BC 586 A2.2, Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 14.3.1957.

¹⁶⁴ *Nux* no. 2, 10.4.1957.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.* no. 1, March 1957.

¹⁶⁶ M. Coghlan, *op. cit.*, pp. 54, 57, 61; B.L. Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 92; P.S. Thompson, *Natalians first: separatism in South Africa 1909-1961*, Southern, Bergville, 1990, pp. 153, 155, 156.

¹⁶⁷ BC 586 A2.2, Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 2.3.1957.

¹⁶⁸ BC 586 B4.1, 'Report on the Executive Visit paid by Mr Wentzel (President) and Mr Rubin (Vice-Pres. for International Relations) to Rhodes, Grahamstown Train. Coll., Fort Hare, Univ. of Natal (Durban European, Non-European, Pietermaritzburg and Medical School) and Natal Training College', 30.3.1957, p. 9.

picketed NP gatherings, provoking racially and sexually offensive responses from the NP devotees.¹⁶⁹

Targeting governing party meetings could certainly be construed as engaging in party political activities, something that was generally held to be taboo by the UNP student body. In an analysis of the 'non-political' British National Union of Students (NUS), it was argued that 'no politics' to the NUS in the Cold War 1950s meant 'no left wing politics'.¹⁷⁰ Similarly, when the political interests of white English-speaking students were aligned with those of mainstream political bodies with which these students identified, for example the UP, the UFP and the ARL, student political concerns achieved respectability and were no longer regarded as 'political' and outside the student domain.

The ARL successfully expanded its operations into the Eastern Cape.¹⁷¹ English-speakers there shared some of the fears and sentiments of their Natal counterparts. This could partially explain the unexpected enthusiasm displayed by the Rhodes student body for the academic freedom campaign in 1957. Russell has argued that defending university autonomy 'evoked all the dormant anti-Afrikaner feeling which is very much part of the South African English academic tradition – "they" were trying to push "us" around'.¹⁷² However, one of the leaders of the Rhodes academic freedom campaign was Jan Breitenbach, the Afrikaans-speaking chairman of the SRC and *Afrikaanse Studentevereeniging*¹⁷³ who was also partially responsible for the surprising, in the opinion of the NUSAS executive, co-operation between the Rhodes and Fort Hare student bodies.¹⁷⁴

Return of Fort Hare

Rhodes was the examining body of Fort Hare, a valued status it would lose were the neighbouring university college transferred to the Native Affairs Department. Consequently, many exchanges occurred between the governing bodies and senates of the two (black and white) institutions to decide on their joint approach to imminent government

¹⁶⁹ *Nux* no. 4, June 1957.

¹⁷⁰ D. Jacks, *Student politics and higher education*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1975, p. 84.

¹⁷¹ B.L. Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 90; P.S. Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

¹⁷² M. Russell, 'Intellectuals and academic apartheid, 1950-1956', P. van den Berghe (ed), *The liberal dilemma in South Africa*, Croon Helm, London, 1979, p. 139.

¹⁷³ *Rhodeo* vol. 10 no. 1, 30.3.1957.

¹⁷⁴ The chairperson of the Rhodes Local NUSAS Committee was regarded by NUSAS as very conservative. By contrast, a leading light on the Rhodes SRC hitherto known for his anti-NUSAS sentiments had become very co-operative. BC 586 B4.1, 'Report on the Executive Visit paid by Mr Wentzel (President) and Mr Rubin (Vice-Pres. for International Relations) to Rhodes, Grahamstown Train. Coll., Fort Hare, Univ. of Natal (Durban European, Non-European, Pietermaritzburg and Medical School) and Natal Training College', 30.3.1957, p. 1.

intervention.¹⁷⁵ However, NUSAS remained cut-off from the Fort Hare student body as it had largely been since 1952, despite numerous attempts to initiate contact and dialogue. For NUSAS, securing the re-affiliation of Fort Hare was critical. Its claim to represent all those opposed to university apartheid was severely weakened with Fort Hare - vitally affected by university apartheid - outside the national union's ranks. The Fort Hare student body was certainly concerned about government intentions regarding higher education and during what they described as a 'very critical time' for Fort Hare and the open universities¹⁷⁶ publicly condemned the appointment of the Van der Walt Commission in April 1956. Moreover, there were signs that a significant number of Fort Hare students favoured breaking free from their isolation and seeking contact with other students. A motion introduced by T.W. Gcabashe to rescind the 1954 resolution which had severed all ties with the Rhodes student body because of the latter's patronising and racist attitude towards their Fort Hare counterparts was comfortably defeated by a student mass meeting in April 1956.¹⁷⁷ Shortly thereafter, NUSAS reminded Fort Hare of its 1954 undertaking to 'assist NUSAS whenever NUSAS works for the common interest' and at the same time disclosed the details of its new campaign to 'resist apartheid'¹⁷⁸ at UCT and Wits. Fort Hare students were urged to co-operate with the national union if only to hear the 'other man's [sic] point of view'.¹⁷⁹ As was usually the case, this letter went unanswered by an SRC and student body dominated by those hostile to collaboration with white liberals.

Despite this rebuttal, NUSAS began to put in place the conditions necessary for securing Fort Hare's return. Probably flowing from the work of Jan Breitenbach, the vice-president of the Fort Hare SRC attended the 1956 NUSAS congress in his personal capacity. The content of his address to the student assembly is not recorded but it probably included the latest developments arising from the closure of the college the previous year. Subsequently the congress passed a resolution that the closure of Fort Hare in 1955 was 'not justified',¹⁸⁰ a stand it had balked at taking the previous year (against the strong opposition of the radical left) because the liberal majority were reluctant to question the actions of the college's missionary authorities whose judgement it implicitly trusted. In another new departure, the 1956 assembly offered its full support to the ANC-initiated African Education

¹⁷⁵ D. Williams, *A history of the University College of Fort Hare, South Africa – the 1950s: the waiting years*, Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter, 2001, pp. 298-301, 330.

¹⁷⁶ J.F. Kozonguizi, 'Our stand in international student affairs', *Fort Harian*, August 1956, p. 5. Kozonguizi became the leader of the South West African National Union (SWANU). S. Ndlovu, 'The ANC in exile, 1960-1970', South African Democracy and Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 1, 1960-1970*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004, p. 429.

¹⁷⁷ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of mass meetings 1951-1956', 4.4.1956.

¹⁷⁸ BC 586 M1, E. Wentzel to Chairman of the Fort Hare SRC, 12.4.1956. NUSAS used far stronger language and terminology when addressing Fort Hare than it would use when addressing Rhodes or Durban.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Rhodeo* vol. 9 no. 4, 6.9.1956.

Movement¹⁸¹ (aimed at establishing alternative education to Bantu Education) which it had also been equivocal about doing before. Following the example of the ISC which was competing with the IUS to win the loyalty of 'colonial' students, the student assembly adopted a resolution rejecting the negative impact of colonialism on education¹⁸² which was in similar vein to resolutions emanating from the IUS which again in the past NUSAS had refused to endorse. This change in direction was probably also influenced by the experience of some NUSAS leaders attending international gatherings composed largely of students from the Third World. NUSAS, they realised, was perceived to be a white student organisation by Third World students and thus could not afford to be as selective as it was in South Africa about the policies with which it would associate itself.¹⁸³ That colonialism was an issue to Fort Hare students was underlined in August 1956 when Gcabashe argued that Fort Hare's disaffiliation in 1952 was motivated by the 'anti-colonial' foreign policy of NUSAS and the patronising and paternalistic attitude of NUSAS officials towards Fort Hare students and not racism and anti-white hostility as insinuated by liberals in the SAIRR. Gcabashe stated that Fort Hare was 'ever ready to join hands with all who see in us that which makes a man' and not that which makes a level headed native'.¹⁸⁴ However, all of these measures to accommodate Fort Hare threatened to lead to nothing when the assembly took a decisive step into the Cold War by applying for full delegate status of the Western-aligned ISC and reversed its decision taken earlier in the congress to send an observer to the Fourth World Student Congress of the IUS.¹⁸⁵

Shortly after the conclusion of the NUSAS Congress, the new NUSAS president, Ernie Wentzel, to his surprise, was invited to address the Fort Hare 'Students' Social Studies Committee' on the implications of university apartheid.¹⁸⁶ It was unclear what motivated the invitation: whether a genuine interest in university apartheid, or the start of overtures for rapprochement with the national union or an opportunity to attack NUSAS policy.¹⁸⁷ Ultimately only one student 'hammered' NUSAS on its refusal to fight for complete political and social equality while the rest of the large, seemingly sympathetic audience appeared impressed by the national union's academic freedom campaign.¹⁸⁸ The SRC, markedly more inclined towards the now dominant non-racial orientation of the ANC, agreed on the necessity of rekindling relations with NUSAS and intimated that if it received a mandate

¹⁸¹ *New Age*, 26.7.1956.

¹⁸² *ibid.*

¹⁸³ BC 586 A2.1, John (Didcott) to Ernie (Wentzel), 21.5.1956; 26.5.1956; na. (?) E. Wentzel to John (Didcott); 2.6.1956.

¹⁸⁴ T.W. Gcabashe, 'Is Fort Hare anti-white?', *Fort Harian*, August 1956, p. 18.

¹⁸⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 7 no. 4, August 1956; *New Age*, 26.7.1956.

¹⁸⁶ BC 586 M1, J.S.F. Magagula to L. Wentzel [sic], 30.7.1956; *SA Student* vol. 20 no. 1, September 1956.

¹⁸⁷ BC 586 B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 5.9.1956.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*

from the student body to do so, it would re-affiliate. For NUSAS this was the 'most significant event...in the last five years...not just in student affairs, but in South Africa generally'.¹⁸⁹

However, much of the student body remained sympathetic to the anti-collobrationist SOYA and militant Africanist position. Thus, it did not debate re-affiliation, refused to send observers to the NUSAS executive meeting and instead voted to convene an 'All-In Student Conference' to discuss opposition to university apartheid which would exclude 'collaboration with NUSAS'.¹⁹⁰ Nonetheless, the tentative discussions between the Rhodes and Fort Hare SRCs begun in September 1956 regarding the possibility of mounting a joint campaign against university apartheid continued.¹⁹¹ In February 1957, shortly before the tabling of the Separate University Education Bill, Wentzel wrote at length to the Fort Hare SRC on the importance of 'contact between students of different races'. Wentzel believed that suspicions between people who did not know one another as friends disappeared when they were able to debate ideas together. He argued further that in South Africa, it was not race that divided people but rather ideas and assured Fort Hare that in NUSAS with its many divergent points of view, Fort Hare would find support for its position from students of all races. NUSAS was also held up as one of the few forums in which all races could meet, something which could rapidly come to an end were university apartheid and a new mooted Native Laws Amendment Bill (which sought to close off all multi-racial contact - discussed later) enacted.¹⁹² This letter resulted in the Fort Hare student body voting unanimously to accede to the request of NUSAS and their SRC, the latter led by Ambrose Makiwane (an ANCYL leader fired by the Native Affairs Department from his teaching post, later a member of the SACP and head of the ANC's exile mission in Cuba¹⁹³), that the national union be allowed to visit the college.¹⁹⁴

The reasons for the disaffiliation in 1952 were revisited and to NUSAS's surprise it discovered that racial snubbing by white delegates at NUSAS congresses had been more galling to Fort Hare students than the national union's limited political programme. For the first time publicly, NUSAS argued that it was for tactical reasons that it fought apartheid only in the educational sphere and that those who opposed educational apartheid were

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of mass meetings 1951-1956', 'Emergency Mass Meeting held on Wednesday 17 October 1956 at the Christian Union Hall at 2 pm'.

¹⁹¹ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of mass meetings 1951-1956', 1.10.1956; *Rhodeo* vol. 10 no. 1, 30.3.1957.

¹⁹² BC 586 M1, E. Wentzel to L. Ngcongco, 27.2.1957.

¹⁹³ S. Ndlovu, *op. cit.*, pp. 466, 584.

¹⁹⁴ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of mass meetings 1951-1956', 'Emergency Mass Meeting held on 13th March, 1957 (Wednesday) at 2 pm in the C.U. Hall'.

also likely to reject all aspects of the ideology.¹⁹⁵ From the scant attention paid to its international loyalties,¹⁹⁶ it was clear that NUSAS's decision to leave the IUS was no longer the issue it had been when Fort Hare disaffiliated and that the SRC was prepared to overlook differences in foreign policy for the sake of fighting university apartheid. The NUSAS leadership realised that university apartheid was behind the rapprochement and for this reason took 'the strongest possible line' as 'the stronger the line we take, the more likely they are to support us'.¹⁹⁷ Although some NEUM supporters were against this, the SRC decided to re-affiliate to NUSAS were the student body to agree. Before the mass meeting, the NUSAS visitors attended a college social and so as to avoid accusations of social snubbing and racism, danced 'wildly' with as many students as they could, raising the eyebrows of some members of the college staff.¹⁹⁸ Later that evening, Wentzel addressed a mass meeting on the policy and structure of the national union and even though objections to NUSAS policy similar to those raised earlier by the SRC came from the floor, the student body voted unanimously to rejoin the national union.¹⁹⁹

Why had this occurred? In a later interview with the Congress-aligned press, SRC members, Ambrose Makiwane and Lovemore Mutambanengwe (a Southern Rhodesian) explained that the decision to re-affiliate was motivated by the need to form a united front against university apartheid. This had become possible when the threat of university apartheid had forced NUSAS 'to face political issues whether [it] liked it or not' and take a political stand. Makiwane said Fort Hare still had differences with the national union but it was 'not the time to split the opposition' to university apartheid.²⁰⁰ Moreover, the Fort Hare decision accorded with ANC policy on constructing a united front against apartheid. The important role of individuals - and particularly politically connected individuals - in securing re-affiliation cannot be discounted. In 1956, Z.K. Matthews, acting principal of Fort Hare, Treason Trial defendant and an ANC executive member who inspired the Defiance Campaign and Congress of the People, impressed on students the seriousness of looming university apartheid and the importance of presenting a united front against it. This could perhaps have also included a rapprochement with NUSAS. Shortly after Fort Hare's re-affiliation, Matthews, away at the Treason Trial, observed from a distance that the current

¹⁹⁵ BC 586 B4.1, 'Report on the Executive Visit paid by Mr Wentzel (President) and Mr Rubin (Vice-Pres. for International Relations) to Rhodes, Grahamstown Training College, Fort Hare, the University of Natal (Durban European, Non-European, Pietermaritzburg and Medical School) and Natal Training College', 30.3.1957, pp. 3-4.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of mass meetings 1951-1956', 'Emergency Mass Meeting held on Saturday, 23rd March, 1957 at 7.30 pm at the C.U. Hall'.

²⁰⁰ *New Age*, 16.5.1957.

SRC was doing well, and noted, seemingly approvingly, that it would be represented at meetings in Cape Town and on the Rand.²⁰¹ It was - the 'Open Universities Conference' in Cape Town and the Wits 'Inter-SRC Conference on University Apartheid' in May 1957. The influential, strong-willed Makiwane was on occasions known to act independently without a mandate from the SRC and student body and sometimes even flouted their wishes. He had much to do with the re-affiliation.²⁰² Moreover, the national ANCYL had devoted some time to analysing the consequences of university apartheid and denounced it in no uncertain terms. The ANC maintained ties with the ANCYL at Fort Hare via Govan Mbeki, ANC leader in Port Elizabeth.²⁰³ Thus the role of the ANC cannot be discounted in the re-affiliation. Whether or not the ANC was involved in propelling Fort Hare back into NUSAS, it is quite clear that by 1957 the political goals of Fort Hare and NUSAS coincided fairly closely and thus it made sense for Fort Hare to return to the national union and access its superior resources to fight apartheid. For NUSAS, the re-affiliation meant that it could legitimately claim to represent all students and, in a big setback for the government, could fight university apartheid on behalf of Fort Hare and black students in general.

With Fort Hare back in the NUSAS fold and the ban on contact with Rhodes lifted, the two Eastern Cape SRCs cemented their unofficial joint campaign against university apartheid. In March 1957 they issued a statement rejecting the Separate University Education Bill²⁰⁴ and voiced their objections to comments made by Verwoerd to the Stellenbosch NP *Jeugbond* that the open universities were being used to transform Africans into black Englishmen hostile to Afrikanerdom.²⁰⁵ A joint petition was circulated at both campuses calling for the immediate withdrawal of the Bill²⁰⁶ and Fort Hare students participated in what became a controversial symposium on university apartheid organised by the Rhodes SRC.²⁰⁷ This symposium drew unwanted attention from the NP press partly because of black participation. Moreover, in his argument in favour of opening Rhodes to all races, Guy Butler, the distinguished South African playwright based at the university, claimed that he would rather teach 'coffee coloured bastards' to 'barbarous whites',²⁰⁸ in the process mocking and ridiculing the NP's concerns with miscegenation.

²⁰¹ F. Matthews, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

²⁰² D. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 330-336.

²⁰³ T. Karis and G. Carter (eds), *From protest to challenge, profiles of African politics in South Africa, 1882-1964, volume 4*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1977, p. 82.

²⁰⁴ *New Age*, 21.3.1957; *Rhodeo* vol. 10 no. 1, 30.3.1957.

²⁰⁵ *Argus*, 18.3.1957; *Rhodeo* vol. 10 no. 1, 30.3.1957.

²⁰⁶ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of mass meetings 1951-1956', 'Emergency Mass Meeting held on Monday, 18th March, 1957 at 8pm in the CU Hall'; D. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

²⁰⁷ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of mass meetings 1951-1956', 'Emergency Mass Meeting held on Monday, 18th March, 1957 at 8pm in the CU Hall'; O1.2, Di (Hermans) to Ernie (Wentzel) and Norman (Bromberger), 1.4.1957.

²⁰⁸ BC 586 O1.2, Di (Hermans) to Ernie (Wentzel) and Norman (Bromberger), 1.4.1957.

The first ever university protest march (termed the more neutral 'procession') took place in Grahamstown in March 1957. Lending legitimacy to this unprecedented event was the participation of the Rhodes Senate, Council and Convocation which condemned the transfer of Fort Hare to the government and the abrogation of Rhodes's autonomy.²⁰⁹ After the heady excitement of the first phase of the campaign, participation dwindled and academic freedom again became the preserve of Rhodes's 'old faithful'.²¹⁰

For the Fort Hare student body, embarking on militant protest action was not initially a unanimous decision. Many students regarded university apartheid (like Bantu Education before it) as a foregone conclusion and thus reasoned that opposition to government plans was futile. The most that many students could envisage was some sort of symbolic protest rather than actually confronting the government.²¹¹ Adherents of the non-collaborationist SOYA had a predisposition to 'armchair politics' and refused to demonstrate at all.²¹² It could also be argued that for black Fort Hare students (unlike their privileged and basically free white counterparts), active politics posed a threat to their future careers as it exposed students to the real possibility of university exclusion (as occurred after the closure of Fort Hare in 1955) and post university unemployment, or government harassment, as the arrest on the charge of treason of Z.K. Matthews illustrated. In what was otherwise a remarkable display of inter-racial solidarity, some Fort Hare students questioned the legality of their participation in a joint Rhodes-Fort Hare placard demonstration to be held in Port Elizabeth.²¹³ Donovan Williams (a member of staff who subsequently authored a history of Fort Hare) argues that the strong line taken by Fort Hare students stemmed partly from the influential presence of the somewhat older Makiwane.²¹⁴

Makiwane, as SRC president, played a leading role in the official three hundred and sixty-strong, university-wide march to the town of Alice protesting the Second Reading of the university apartheid Bill in May 1957. The march concluded in the passing of a resolution sent to the Minister of Education, Arts and Science, which limited itself to reaffirming Fort Hare's commitment to academic freedom and university autonomy and total rejection of the establishment of tribal institutions. Banners carried by the marchers proclaiming 'We are

²⁰⁹ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1956-1957*, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

²¹⁰ BC 586 O1.2, Di (Hermans) to Ernie (Wentzel) and Norman (Bromberger), 1.4.1957.

²¹¹ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of mass meetings 1951-1956', 'Emergency Mass Meeting held on Wednesday, 17th October 1956 at the CU Hall at 2pm'; D. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 232-236.

²¹² BC 586 M1, 'University Apartheid' issued by VE, SOYA Executive (nd.); *New Age*, 18.5.1957.

²¹³ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of mass meetings 1951-1956', 'Emergency Mass Meeting held on Monday, 18th March, 1957 at 8pm in the CU Hall'.

²¹⁴ D. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 330-332.

Africans not Zulus or Sothos' and 'We shall not be brainwashed'²¹⁵ asserted a strong African nationalism but more importantly, reflected the deep fear of the imposition of Bantu Education and the removal from Fort Hare, not only of coloured and Indian students, but also non-Xhosa-speaking Africans. Speeches from African members of staff deplored, in liberal terms, the closing of the open universities and the associated implications for black advancement and inter-racial contact.²¹⁶ Students sympathetic to SOYA did not participate,²¹⁷ presumably because demonstration was deemed to be futile, was limited to educational apartheid only and associated with white liberals and NUSAS. However, this stance lost SOYA much ground on the campus.²¹⁸ A member of the Fort Hare SRC reflected on the importance of having for the first time mounted a joint protest with the college staff as without a united front, 'resistance' could have been 'seriously impaired' and divisions sown by those hostile to the campaign.²¹⁹

Was Fort Hare a united front? Williams argues that staff protest against the Separate University Education Bill was led by a group of anti-Afrikaans, LP supporters/members on the college Senate (many of them 'foreigners') who were irresponsibly and selfishly 'sacrificing' the futures of black staff members²²⁰ by using the academic freedom campaign for their own wider 'political' purposes.²²¹ As such, he argues, they had little support from African members of staff who were more sympathetic to the 'cautious', 'practical', 'judicious'²²² white fence-sitters on the Senate who wanted no truck with the 'political'²²³ activities of the 'Liberals' and who often allied themselves with the supporters of government takeover.²²⁴ Whether the academic freedom campaign was foreign LP-dominated or not, the second part of Williams' argument is patently untrue and not even borne out by Williams' own evidence. All African members of the Senate voted against the imposition of apartheid as did the Lecturers' Association. African staff members certainly participated in the march to Alice. Suspicions of LP domination were evidently rife as Makiwane felt obliged to refute allegations that students were 'incited' by white (LP) college staff members.²²⁵ These allegations were probably made by the government and conservative whites intent on undermining African agency and the significance of black-white and student-staff co-operation. Fort Hare students 'disliked intensely' the white

²¹⁵ *New Age*, 6.6.1957.

²¹⁶ *ibid.*

²¹⁷ BC 586 M1, L. Mutambanengwe to Neville (Rubin), 22.5.1957.

²¹⁸ *New Age*, 16.5.1957.

²¹⁹ BC 586 M1, L. Mutambanengwe to Neville (Rubin), 22.5.1957.

²²⁰ D. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 324, 326, 328.

²²¹ *ibid.*, pp. 306-328.

²²² *ibid.*, p. 320.

²²³ *ibid.*, p. 314.

²²⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 309, 312.

²²⁵ *New Age*, 6.6.1957.

conservative grouping who, as well as attempting to 'inhibit' and 'forestall' strong protest action against government takeover, had 'unpleasant relations' with their students. This was in sharp contrast to the esteem in which their well 'liked' LP colleagues were held.²²⁶

The Separate University Education Bill: Second Reading

The Fort Hare and nation-wide university protests intentionally coincided with the Second Reading of the Separate University Education Bill. Beale argues that the Bill and its justification were quite clearly authored by the Native Affairs Department and not the segregationist Viljoen who during the Second Reading stuck closely to his typewritten speech with a 'grim looking Verwoerd sitting directly behind him'.²²⁷ Moreover, Viljoen claimed not even to have read the report of the Van der Walt Commission before it was printed²²⁸ while six months earlier he had stated at a University of South Africa (UNISA) graduation that 'our universities must not be determined from outside' and 'must transcend the volk'.²²⁹ Nonetheless, Viljoen argued firstly that the removal of black students from the open universities was required to safeguard the security of the state which was threatened by 'mounting African political opposition'. Many of these black activists he alleged, were educated at the open universities and consequently became culturally alienated from their communities, becoming 'agitators' and 'traitors' instead of leaders and 'social assets'.²³⁰ Secondly, Viljoen disingenuously argued that the open universities discriminated against black students by practicing social segregation. Viljoen's third argument, that the open universities would inevitably become black institutions were there no intervention in their admission policies, was according to Beale, an 'echo' of earlier 'simpler segregationist' models of university apartheid.²³¹ Viljoen justified the transfer of responsibility for African education from his department to that of Native Affairs by arguing for the necessity of streamlining African education and 'Bantu development' in one department. Crudely, the Native Affairs Department would control the supply and demand of university trained Africans required for the government's separate development policy.²³²

Many opposition speakers pointed to the startling change of policy followed by Viljoen in his years as Minister of Education, Arts and Science. They noted their awareness that the Separate University Education Bill was not his craftsmanship but that of the Native Affairs

²²⁶ BC 586 B4.1, Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 'Report on Visit to Fort Hare, 23 Sept. to 1st Oct.', 18.10.1957, p. 4.

²²⁷ M. Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

²²⁸ BC 586 B4.1, Ernie Wentzel to the Executive, 9.8.1956.

²²⁹ Quoted in *Nux Crisis Edition*, no. 1, March 1957.

²³⁰ M. Beale, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-115.

²³¹ *ibid.*, p. 116.

²³² *ibid.*, pp. 117-119.

Department. They thus drew particular attention to a statement made by Viljoen in 1951 that he would not interfere with the autonomy of the universities.²³³ This challenge to Viljoen was orchestrated in part by NUSAS, as executive members going through old files had come across his 1951 statement and had realised what a powerful weapon it could be in the university apartheid campaign. NUSAS recognised that serious divisions existed within the NP which could be exploited to defeat the apartheid Bill.²³⁴

Press coverage too was believed to be critical in exposing and opposing the Separate Universities Bill. NUSAS deliberately cultivated the press and by January 1957 had built up such a cordial relationship with the Cape newspapers that it had the free use of the *Cape Times's* telex machine.²³⁵ The *Witwatersrand Student* reported that the liberal English South African press stood 'four square' behind the open universities²³⁶ as it devoted hundreds of columns of print in the form of press reports and editorials to the academic freedom campaign. In the opinion of a NUSAS executive member, overseas press support on the editorial side had by May 1957, 'reached almost the same degree of coverage as in South Africa', while international denunciation of university apartheid forced 'the government to tone down its extremism'.²³⁷

This put the NP-aligned Afrikaans press at a disadvantage. Unable (like the government) 'to stem the tide of protest against university apartheid' it had resorted (like the government) to 'Jew baiting' and reports of miscegenation ('deurmekaarboerdery').²³⁸ In an attempt to undermine the academic freedom campaign, the Minister of Education claimed that a 'leftish' and even 'communist' element was behind this anti-government opposition. This claim was embellished by NP-supporting newspapers with a discussion of the leading role played by Jewish students in the academic freedom campaign. Historically Afrikaner nationalism had elided communism and its internationalism (both the absolute enemy of Afrikaner nationalism) with the 'unassimilable', 'cosmopolitan' 'Jew'.²³⁹ The avowedly anti-communist NUSAS executive rejected the Minister's allegations and challenged him to repeat them outside parliament.²⁴⁰ Communist labelling was an effective weapon against NUSAS because of its working relationship in the university apartheid campaign with the radical left, many of whom were probably sympathetic to the banned CPSA. Moreover, if

²³³ *ibid.*, p. 118.

²³⁴ P.M.A. Hunt, 'Government motives for delaying S.U.E. bill', *SA Student* vol. 22 no. 3, June 1957, p. 6.

²³⁵ BC 586 A2.2, President (E. Wentzel) to 'Trevorji' (Coombe), 31.1.1957.

²³⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 9 no. 1, March 1957.

²³⁷ BC 586 O6.1 (O.19), M. Gunther, 'Academic Freedom Committee Report, 14 May 1957'.

²³⁸ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 9 no. 1, March 1957.

²³⁹ C. Marx, *Oxwagon sentinel, radical Afrikaner nationalism and the history of the Ossewabrandwag*, Unisa Press, Pretoria, nd. (originally published in German in 1998), pp. 239, 257-8.

²⁴⁰ *NUSAS Newsletter/Nuusbrief* no. 5, 4.1957; no. 6, 25.4.1957.

the national union appeared too anti-communist, it risked alienating its black membership, particularly the newly affiliated Fort Hare student body.

The Separate University Education Bill successfully passed its Second Reading, but instead of continuing its passage through the House of Assembly and Senate was dispatched to a Select Committee which itself was later transformed into a parliamentary Commission of Inquiry. This was surprising considering that the government appeared to be in a hurry to implement university apartheid and had already begun construction of the new university colleges for this purpose. When pressed by NUSAS for an explanation of these developments – developments which Coombe, the new NUSAS president mused signalled the government's 'extraordinary conception of parliamentary government that enables an act to be implemented before it is passed'²⁴¹ - the Secretary of the Native Affairs Department untruthfully alleged that the new buildings were intended for training colleges.²⁴² For Coombe, the stalling of the Separate Universities Education Bill offered a 'welcome', 'temporary' reprieve to the open universities, which he surmised had come about because of the reluctance of the government to alienate leading academics just prior to the 1958 general election.²⁴³

Clearing the decks of contentious legislation and healing the divisions which had opened up within the NP ranks regarding university apartheid seemed to be a government priority before the 1958 election. With regard to the latter, idealistic total apartheid intellectuals (dubbed 'Visionaries' by Lazar and discussed in more detail in chapter four) within the NP's premier race relations body, SABRA, together with members of the Afrikaans churches expressed their reservations about the degree of state control envisaged at the government's new ethnic institutions. Overwhelming overseas criticism against the university apartheid Bill,²⁴⁴ largely the fruit of NUSAS's international campaign was, Coombe surmised, another possible reason for the appointment of the Select Commission. Less likely considering the levels of depravity to which the government had already and would in the future stoop to secure racial separation, was Coombe's speculation that there was a collective pricking of the Nationalist conscience at having gone too far.²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ BC 586 B4.1, Trevor (Coombe) to the Executive, 26.7.1957.

²⁴² BC 586 A2.1, Magnus (Gunther) to Trevor (Coombe), 20.8.1957; B1 Assembly Minutes 1958, p. 25.

²⁴³ *Cape Times*, 23.5.1957; 2.7.1957.

²⁴⁴ *Cape Times*, 2.7.1957.

²⁴⁵ *ibid.*

Adoption of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights

With university apartheid temporarily out of sight and out of mind, NUSAS was able to focus its attention on both cementing Fort Hare's position in NUSAS as well as winning back other black centres like UNNE. Just prior to Fort Hare's re-affiliation, the Fort Hare SRC and the NUSAS leadership agreed that henceforward the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights would form the foundation of NUSAS policy.²⁴⁶ It is possible that the Fort Hare SRC suggested this, as its predecessor had considered the adoption of the Universal Declaration as an alternative to its eventually unsuccessful attempt to amend the NUSAS constitution in 1951.²⁴⁷ The Declaration primarily upheld individual rights associated with liberal democracy, but also more radically, included a minority of socio-economic rights such as employment protection and the right to access a minimum level of resources such as housing, health care and education.²⁴⁸ Its preamble declared that all were born free, equal in dignity and rights and entitled to these rights irrespective of race and colour. The Universal Declaration was an excellent foundation for a national union composed of students of different socio-economic and racial backgrounds intent on opposing a level of racial discrimination often compared at the time to Nazism. The Declaration emerged out of both the Nuremberg Trials²⁴⁹ and the earlier Atlantic Charter. The Atlantic Charter inspired both the ANC's 'African Claims' of 1943²⁵⁰ and NUSAS's 'Four Freedoms of a University'. In addition the Declaration resonated with the Freedom Charter. Moreover, the liberal wing of the UP also defended the fundamental rights of humankind as espoused by the United Nations.²⁵¹

Nonetheless, notwithstanding the suitability of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to NUSAS, a resolution based on this document was difficult to draft because firstly, it had to be radical enough to satisfy black students' demands for a more politicised student organisation, but not so radical as to alienate NUSAS's conservative, white student base. Secondly, as the NUSAS president pointed out, 'a bald statement of support for the Univ. [sic] Declaration is absolutely useless because if that's what we are going to do, we might as well go into politics and get it over with'.²⁵² By adopting the Universal Declaration,

²⁴⁶ BC 586 B4.1, 'Report on the Executive Visit paid by Mr Wentzel (President) and Mr Rubin (Vice-Pres. International Relations) to Rhodes, Grahamstown Training College, Fort Hare, the University of Natal (Durban European, Non-European, Pietermaritzburg and Medical School) and Natal Training College', 30.3.1957, pp. 3-4.

²⁴⁷ D. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

²⁴⁸ J. Hoffman and P. Graham, *Introduction to political concepts*, Pearson Longman, Edinburgh Gate, 2006, pp. 176, 179-181; United Nations Department of Public Information, *The United Nations and apartheid 1948-1994: the United Nations Blue Book Series, volume 1*, United Nations, New York, 1994, p. 9.

²⁴⁹ *ibid.*; J. Hoffman and P. Graham, *op. cit.*, pp. 176, 179-181.

²⁵⁰ T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1983, pp. 23-24.

²⁵¹ E. Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 808.

²⁵² BC 586 A2.2, na. (?) E. Wentzel to Trevor (Coombe), 26.4.1957.

NUSAS by implication would have to endorse a non-racial franchise (endorsed by no white political party at the time) and reject the land acts, job reservation and migrant labour, in other words, the entire segregatory foundations on which modern South Africa was built. Even more controversially for the constitutionally-inclined NUSAS was that the preamble of the Universal Declaration sanctioned 'recourse...to rebellion against tyranny and oppression'.²⁵³ Thus, the resolution had to state unambiguously that NUSAS would still restrict its activities to educational affairs and by implication would not then have a policy regarding other political issues such as the franchise.²⁵⁴

The apartheid and Universal Declaration resolution was to be moved at the annual congress in July 1957 by Wentzel and Coombe, the latter then president of the Pietermaritzburg SRC. So as to have a mandate from Pietermaritzburg,²⁵⁵ Coombe successfully persuaded his SRC to pass a motion declaring its opposition to apartheid,²⁵⁶ which at Wentzel's request made no mention of the Universal Declaration,²⁵⁷ presumably because of the Declaration's universal franchise and other radical clauses. A student mass meeting unanimously ratified this resolution but this decision was later invalidated as there was no quorum.²⁵⁸ *Nux* recognised the significance of this change of policy for NUSAS. The realisation by Pietermaritzburg students that apartheid interfered with education and thus could not be ignored, *Nux* contended, brought the student body closer to the thinking of Fort Hare students who had disaffiliated from NUSAS because of the national union's limited political programme. Thus national student unity had been strengthened at a time when student unity was essential.²⁵⁹

Shortly before the NUSAS Congress, the Wits SRC (with the exception of those associated with the NP) adopted a resolution declaring its opposition to apartheid and its belief 'in a truly democratic system of education' which 'can only prevail in a society based on the ... principles ... expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights'. The resolution accepted that students were part of society and declared that the SRC would 'play its role in the total life of the community'. However, it was more qualified than that of Pietermaritzburg's in that it stated that it would 'as far as possible' engage in political

²⁵³ 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights', <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/> accessed 7.11.2009.

²⁵⁴ BC 586 A2.2, na. (?) E. Wentzel to Trevor (Coombe), 26.4.1957.

²⁵⁵ *Nux* no. 4, June 1957.

²⁵⁶ BC 586 O4.1, University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg) SRC Minutes, 8.5.1957; *SA Student* vol. 22 no. 3, June 1957.

²⁵⁷ BC 586 A2.2, na. (?) E. Wentzel to Trevor (Coombe), 26.4.1957.

²⁵⁸ BC 586 O4.1, 'UNP: Minutes of a general meeting of the student body held at 7.45pm on Tues, June 11, 1957 in the Union Hall'; *Nux* no. 4, June 1957.

²⁵⁹ *Nux* no. 4, June 1957.

activity only in the 'strictly academic and student fields'.²⁶⁰ The six member-strong left led by Treason Trial defendant, Ismael Mohammed (later a defendant in the 1985 Pietermaritzburg and Delmas treason trials, vice-president in the 1980s of the United Democratic Front in the Transvaal, ANC member of parliament and professor of Mathematics at Wits) and COD activist Ada Bloomberg (sister of Charles Bloomberg, the fearless *Sunday Times* journalist who exposed the *Broederbond*), attempted to persuade the SRC to adopt a true 'student-in-society' position, but to no avail. Their amendment, that 'under conditions such as prevail in South Africa, student conditions cannot be restricted...to the university but must be directed...against all discriminatory racial measures in South Africa' was soundly defeated.²⁶¹

A slightly modified version of the Wits SRC apartheid motion was adopted by forty votes to none with two abstentions by the NUSAS assembly in July 1957. It read:

'In order to clarify this Assembly's actions in regard to important issues of basic policy, this Assembly affirms the following:

- a) This Assembly asserts its belief in a truly democratic system of education and holds that such a system can only prevail in a society based on the fundamental principles of human rights as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and accepted in principle in Resolution 80 of 1952.
- b) Further, this Assembly considers that as it is a student body and not a political body, it should engage in only those aspects of life having particular reference to the student and education.
- c) However, this Assembly realises that education cannot be separated from the society in which it takes place, and that apartheid in education is an integral part of, and stands and falls with, the total policy of apartheid applying to all spheres of South African life.
- d) Consequently, Assembly declares its opposition to the government policy of Apartheid, which deprives South Africans of freedom of movement, association, expression, study and worship and inter alia, impedes the full development of a truly democratic system in South Africa.
- e) Nonetheless, this Assembly, both from its nature as a student organisation and from the realisation that its effectiveness in carrying out its policy is greatly enhanced by its non-party political character reaffirms that it will not affiliate or identify itself with any political movement or party and will, as far as possible, engage only in the strictly academic, educational and student fields of activity.

Thus, this Assembly declares that it will play its role in the total life of the community by defending and seeking to implement all factors relating to the basic principles of academic freedom and academic equality.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ Resolution 122/57, BC 586 O6.1, 'Minutes of an adjourned SRC meeting held on Thurs, 20 June, 1957, at 7.30pm in Room C.B. 116', p. 3.

²⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁶² *ibid.*; M. Legassick, 'The National Union of South African Students: ethnic cleavage and ethnic integration in the universities', occasional paper no. 4, *African Studies Center, University of California Los Angeles*, University of California, Los Angeles, 1967, p. 30.

In introducing the motion, Wentzel argued in strictly educational terms that the lives of black students were 'a daily history of oppression' and NUSAS could not thus ignore their plight when they were discriminated against in the educational sphere as this was 'side-stepping' policy making decisions. In seconding the motion, Coombe said that to remain silent about apartheid meant to acquiesce and condone it.²⁶³ In analysing this resolution, clauses c and d represent a significant radicalisation of NUSAS policy. But to win the support of conservative students for the shift in policy, this is tempered by clause e. This apartheid resolution, taken overall, is more limited than the 1952 'statement of attitude' narrowly lost after Fort Hare seceded, that read that NUSAS recognised 'that society and education [were] inseparably linked' and would thus 'uphold the principle of political, social and economic equality of all' and accordingly would mobilise its members in the 'struggle against the undemocratic action of the government'.²⁶⁴

Legassick argued that the adoption of the Universal Declaration gave 'ideological expression' to the structural reforms of the national union undertaken by Tobias in the early 1950s. These brought together African nationalists, radical leftists and NUSAS's mass conservative base in one organisation under a moderate leadership tied to the SRCs. However, this structural reform failed to provide an ideological foundation on which political action could be based, with the result that most black students left the national union. With the liberal left leadership of 1957 able to create the space needed for political action which the radical left had earlier been unsuccessful in doing,²⁶⁵ the liberal left was faced with the onerous task of persuading NUSAS's conservative student base into endorsing this.

Thus after the 1957 congress, SRCs were required to review their assembly delegates' endorsement of the apartheid and Universal Declaration resolution. So as to avoid the embarrassment and setback to NUSAS were some centres to dissociate themselves from the resolution, the new NUSAS president, Coombe, compiled a memorandum on the issue.²⁶⁶ All NUSAS affiliates in the Transvaal ratified this new policy, including the teacher training colleges²⁶⁷ which usually abstained on political matters. However, at UCT and Rhodes the adoption of the apartheid motion was more complicated.

²⁶³ *Nux* no. 5, August 1957.

²⁶⁴ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1952, pp. 42-43.

²⁶⁵ M. Legassick, *op. cit.*, pp. 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29.

²⁶⁶ BC 586 B4.1, Trevor Coombe to Executive, 1.8.1957; A2.2, Trevor (Coombe) to Magnus (Gunther), 4.8.1957.

²⁶⁷ BC 586 A2.2, Magnus (Gunther) to Trevor (Coombe), 20.8.1957.

In August 1957, the UCT SRC adopted the NUSAS 'apartheid motion' with two abstentions.²⁶⁸ However, this was only put before the student body in the form of an amendment to the all-embracing anti-university apartheid motion, similar to the one lost in 1956²⁶⁹ which was put before a mass meeting at the request of 'a certain group of non-white students'²⁷⁰ associated with the NEUM in October 1957.²⁷¹ The proposers of the motion argued that UCT's 'conciliatory' and limited campaign against university apartheid had been 'catastrophic'. They rejected any collaboration with the Select Committee²⁷² and presumably also the commission of inquiry which followed the Second Reading of the Separate University Education Bill, with which the UCT SRC had already agreed to cooperate.²⁷³ No final decision was taken on either the motion or the amendment as the quorum was lost halfway through the meeting.²⁷⁴

Both the SRC and student body at Rhodes adopted the apartheid resolution but when it was discovered that the mass meeting had been inquorate the matter was deferred until the presidential visit of Coombe.²⁷⁵ In the meantime, the resolution became entangled in three separate but interlinked developments. Firstly, the burgeoning white co-operation movement (the topic of chapter four) which saw NUSAS as an obstacle to achieving this; secondly, the NP and the *Broederbond's* smear campaign aimed at thwarting Rhodes's expansion into Port Elizabeth;²⁷⁶ and thirdly the unmasking of three student police informers who were suspected of being part of a 'spy ring' centred around W.E.G. Louw (a *Dertigers* poet and professor of Afrikaans-Nederlands at Rhodes and soon to be Arts editor of *Die Burger*) and other leading Nationalists in the Grahamstown Wool Research Institution.²⁷⁷ One informer, who was a student of Louw's, voluntarily confessed to the SRC to reporting on the activities of students and staff to the CID and the Security Branch. Because no university regulation had been contravened, no disciplinary action was taken. However, the SRC released a statement expressing its 'extreme distaste' of spying which it believed amounted to an 'invidious inroad on academic freedom'.²⁷⁸ The Chief of Police,

²⁶⁸ BC 586 O5.1, UCT SRC Minutes, 19.8.1957, pp. 7-8; Norman Bromberger to Trevor (Coombe), 28.8.1957.

²⁶⁹ *Varsity* vol. 14 no. 30, 8.10.1957.

²⁷⁰ *ibid.*, no. 28, 21.8.1957.

²⁷¹ BC 586 A2.2, 'TAC' (Trevor Coombe) to Magnus (Gunther), 9.10.1957, p. 2.

²⁷² *Varsity* vol. 14 no. 30, 8.10.1957.

²⁷³ BC 586 O5.1, UCT SRC Executive Minutes, 3.9.1957.

²⁷⁴ BC 586 A2.2, 'TAC' (Trevor Coombe) to Magnus (Gunther), 9.10.1957, p. 2.

²⁷⁵ BC 586 O1.2, Barbara Ferret to Magnus (Gunther), 5.8.1957; B4.1, Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 14.9.1957, p. 2; Trevor Coombe, 'Report on the President's Visit to Rhodes, 1-4 Oct. 1957'; Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 18.10.1957, p. 8.

²⁷⁶ BC 586 O1.2, Barbara Ferret to Magnus (Gunther), 5.8.1957; B4.1, Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 14.9.1957; 18.10.1957, pp. 8-9; Trevor Coombe, 'Report on the President's Visit to Rhodes, 1-4 Oct. 1957'; *Rhodeo* vol. 11 no. 4, 13.11.1957; *NUSAS Newsletter/Nuusbrief* no. 10, 6.11.1957, p. 4.

²⁷⁷ BC 586 B4.1, Trevor Coombe, 'Report on the President's Visit to Rhodes, 1-4 Oct. 1957'; Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 18.10.1957, pp. 8-9; A2.2, 'TAC' (Trevor Coombe) to Magnus (Gunther), 9.10.1957.

²⁷⁸ BC 586 B4.1, Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 14.9.1957, pp. 1-2.

Brigadier Rademeyer, refused to comment on the 'Rhodes affair' but warned that 'no university could regard itself immune from security procedures',²⁷⁹ thus insinuating that the universities were harbouring subversive elements. At the same time, Makiwane was arrested for obstructing the police during an ANCYL congress in Queenstown. The warrant authorising the police to search the congress listed it was valid for other organisations, including NUSAS.²⁸⁰ Earlier that year a spy had been discovered at Fort Hare too.²⁸¹ In view of both this and Rademeyer's statement, the Fort Hare Lecturers' Association demanded the appointment of a judicial commission of inquiry into spying at universities. *Die Burger* welcomed this believing that a commission's findings would vindicate the need for state security surveillance of the universities.²⁸²

In the midst of these events, the Cape NP press decried the negotiations taking place between the Rhodes authorities and the Port Elizabeth Town Council with regard to procuring a site for the establishment of the new Rhodes branch. Rhodes, the government press argued, discriminated against Afrikaans-speaking students – an allegation strenuously denied by the *Afrikaanse Studentevereniging*. It was moreover a hotbed of left wing NUSAS-inspired subversion – the apartheid resolution being a case in point - and as such could not be entrusted with the control of the independent bilingual university in Port Elizabeth which the NP had in mind.²⁸³ By this time the student body was allegedly so 'cross' about the spies and informers that it was expected to respond by supporting the apartheid resolution.²⁸⁴ This proved correct although the SRC vice-president, Chris Murray, argued that 'if the student body agreed with any one aspect of segregation' it should reject the resolution,²⁸⁵ a line of reasoning similar to that adopted in 1959 by proponents of the white co-operation movement with regard to Rhodes' endorsement of the academic freedom campaign (see chapter five). Murray 'pointedly' inquired whether rejection of the apartheid motion would affect Rhodes' relationship to NUSAS,²⁸⁶ presumably in the hope that this would lead to disaffiliation.

²⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 1.

²⁸⁰ BC 586 B4.1, Trevor Coombe, 'Report on visit to Fort Hare, 23 Sept. to 1st Oct.', Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 18.10.1957, pp. 3, 6.

²⁸¹ F. Matthews, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

²⁸² BC 586 B4.1, Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 14.9.1957, p. 2.

²⁸³ *ibid.*; BC 586 B4.1, Trevor Coombe, 'Report on the President's Visit to Rhodes, 1-4 Oct. 1957', Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 18.10.1957, p. 9; *Rhodeo* vol. 11 no. 4, 13.11.1957.

²⁸⁴ BC 586 O1.2, Magnus Gunther to Barbara Ferret, 10.9.1957.

²⁸⁵ BC 586 B4.1, Trevor Coombe, 'Report on the President's Visit to Rhodes, 1-4 Oct. 1957'; Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 18.10.1957, p. 11.

²⁸⁶ *ibid.*

Defying the Native Laws Amendment Act

Adopting a student-in-society orientation acceptable to its mass student base and bringing Fort Hare back into the NUSAS fold was a considerable achievement which resulted in the national union becoming stronger, more representative and united than it had been in many years. However, the Native Laws Amendment Bill tabled in parliament in February 1957 (at the same time as the Separate University Education Bill) and enacted in May 1957 threatened not only to reverse these advances but also struck at the very existence of the national union. The Bill (particularly clause 29(c), the infamous 'church clause') forced multi-racial organisations such as churches, hospitals and welfare bodies operating in urban areas outside the townships to apply to the Minister of Native Affairs for permission to continue functioning.²⁸⁷ This Bill was aimed at further restricting the movements of urban Africans but also at closing off all avenues of inter-racial contact, which in the opinion of the NP, so threatened the success of apartheid.

The new Bill was badly phrased and ambiguous and it was unclear whether it would actually apply to organisations like NUSAS and the SAIRR.²⁸⁸ While the shocked NUSAS leadership considered its response, it pondered the consequences for NUSAS of the enactment of both university apartheid and the Native Laws Amendment Bill.²⁸⁹ Because this was an abrogation of freedom of association, a capitulation to the government and in any case would prove futile, it was agreed that NUSAS would not apply for permission to hold its annual student assembly.²⁹⁰ However, if prohibited from doing so anyway, would NUSAS risk prosecution of its entire leadership under the punitive Public Safety Act, or worse, risk the proscription of the national union were it to defy the minister's proclamation and go ahead with the congress?²⁹¹ In order to comply with the new act, NUSAS would have to abandon its congress and student assembly and transform itself into a correspondence organisation held together by frequent executive visits to 'evangelise' the various black and white 'tribalised' campuses still allowed to associate themselves with the national union. With the legislation of university apartheid, NUSAS's rallying cry of academic non-segregation would become entirely academic in the immediate future thus severely diminishing the appeal of the national union both to its student base and to its future leadership. It was felt that perhaps NUSAS's new rallying call could be that it was

²⁸⁷ A. Paton, *Apartheid and the archbishop: the life and times of Geoffrey Clayton, Archbishop of Cape Town*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1973, pp. 275-276.

²⁸⁸ One interpretation was that the Bill was not applicable to organisations in existence before 1938. BC 586 A2.2, Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 14.3.1957; 'President' (E. Wentzel) to Trevor (Coombe), 7.3.1957.

²⁸⁹ BC 586 A2.2, President (E. Wentzel) to Trevor (Coombe), 7.3.1957.

²⁹⁰ BC 586 A2.2, Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 7.2.1957; 14.3.1957; 'President' (E. Wentzel) to Trevor (Coombe), 7.3.1957.

²⁹¹ *ibid.*

one of the few forums for inter-racial student contact,²⁹² an argument it was already using in its academic freedom campaign. However, NUSAS could also be eclipsed by the ASB²⁹³ were the latter's proposal for 'federal executive' co-operation along separate racial lines²⁹⁴ be found acceptable to NUSAS centres. With the enactment of university apartheid, the obstacle for the ASB of the representation of mixed student bodies from the 'open' universities at meetings would fall away, making the emergence of some kind of national confederal student body organised along apartheid lines a distinct possibility.²⁹⁵

Until it had finalised its response to the Native Laws Amendment Bill and seen how the churches, the SAIRR and other affected 'non-political' bodies reacted, Wentzel issued an instruction to NUSAS SRCs to desist from discussing the Bill at all.²⁹⁶ The Wits left disagreed and although dissuaded by NUSAS executive members at Wits from doing so, secured the adoption by the SRC of a strongly worded denunciation of the measure²⁹⁷ as the 'most pernicious Bill ever to be brought before parliament' which could 'only lead to a tragic outcome for South Africa' because it limited 'contact' between the races. Controversially, the SRC also committed itself to co-operating with any bodies opposed to the Native Laws Amendment Bill but to placate the liberals who like NUSAS believed in co-operation with selected non-political bodies only, added 'where [this was] in the interest of the SRC'.²⁹⁸

In the run up to the passage of the Native Laws Amendment Bill in May 1957, NUSAS confined itself to attending protest meetings hosted by like-minded, 'non-political' organisations affected by the measure.²⁹⁹ Once the law was enacted however, NUSAS, like the LP, became very wary observers at ANC-convened forums too.³⁰⁰ The adoption by NUSAS of more radical tactics of protest against university apartheid was extended to its approach to the Native Laws Amendment Bill. At an SAIRR conference attended by twenty two organisations to discuss the Bill, the NUSAS representatives persuaded the tactically timid delegates to ignore the measure once it was enacted and in the face of prosecution

²⁹² BC 586 A2.2, President (E. Wentzel) to Trevor (Coombe), 13.3.1957; Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 14.3.1957.

²⁹³ BC 586 A2.2, President (E. Wentzel) to Trevor (Coombe), 13.3.1957.

²⁹⁴ To be discussed later.

²⁹⁵ BC 586 A2.2, President (E. Wentzel) to Trevor (Coombe), 13.3.1957.

²⁹⁶ BC 586 A2.2, Telegram, 28.2.1957; Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 7.2.1957.

²⁹⁷ BC 586 O6.1, Magnus Gunther to Ernie (Wentzel), 18.3.1957; Michael Kimberly to E. Wentzel, 18.3.1957.

²⁹⁸ BC 586 O6.1, Wits SRC Minutes, 14.3.1957, p. 6.

²⁹⁹ BC 586 B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 28.2.1957; na. (?) N. Rubin to Ernie (Wentzel), 7.5.1957; *New Age*, 9.5.1957. Many organisations were affected by the Bill. Apart from the churches and political parties, these included the SAIRR, Civil Rights League, National Council of Women and welfare bodies such as Toc-H, the Cape Flats Distress Association (CAFDA), the South African National Tuberculosis Association (SANTA) and UCT's extensive welfare body, SHAWCO.

³⁰⁰ *New Age*, 30.5.1957; BC 586 A2.2, Magnus (Gunther) to Trevor (Coombe), 8.8.1957; 11.8.1957; Trevor (Coombe) to Magnus (Gunther), 28.8.1957.

for doing so, all would stand together. This was the kind of support NUSAS needed for its intended defiance of the Native Laws Amendment Act.³⁰¹

At the NUSAS annual congress in July 1957, the student assembly voted in future to ignore the prohibition of multi-racial gatherings in urban areas, convene its meetings and take the consequences.³⁰² The responsibility for this act of defiance would be jointly shouldered by the NUSAS president and the two vice-presidents.³⁰³ However, in order to avoid taking this drastic action immediately, NUSAS arranged, eventually unsuccessfully, to hold its annual congress at the Pius the Twelfth Catholic University College in Basutoland the following year.³⁰⁴

How had NUSAS prepared its mass student base for this provocative new policy which represented an abandonment of the purely educational sphere and a sortie into party politics? Firstly, NUSAS was not alone. The Catholic and Anglican churches, both non-political institutions of which many students were members, had already indicated their intentions of disregarding the 'church clause' and Group Areas Amendment if enacted. An official announcement to this effect was made shortly after the conclusion of the NUSAS congress.³⁰⁵ Secondly, the Native Laws Amendment Bill was linked to the Separate University Education Bill, in that they both threatened to curtail students' freedom of association and NUSAS's reason for existence as a forum for students. It was argued that the Native Laws Amendment Bill was 'entirely foreign to [South Africa's] democratic heritage' and instead of protecting students' freedom of association, the Bill transformed this right into 'a favour of Dr Verwoerd'.³⁰⁶ Thirdly, an analogy was made with the loss of freedom suffered by the Hungarians after the Soviet invasion of their country the previous year and finally,³⁰⁷ NUSAS pointed out a fact that was becoming increasingly obvious to liberals generally, that a loss or denial of freedom to the black community represented a concomitant loss of freedom to the white community too.³⁰⁸ NUSAS was evidently successful in winning over its conservative student membership as even the avowedly non-political Durban reluctantly agreed to affiliate to the Council for the Defence of Freedom of Association.³⁰⁹

³⁰¹ BC 586 A2.2, na. (?) N. Rubin to Ernie (Wentzel), 7.5.1957.

³⁰² BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1958, p. 34; *Cape Times*, 2.7.1957; *Star*, 2.7.1957.

³⁰³ BC 586 B4.1, T. Coombe to the Executive, 1.8.1957; O6.1, Wits SRC Minutes, 15.8.1957, p. 2; B1 Congress Minutes 1958, p. 34.

³⁰⁴ *SA Student* vol. 22 no. 3, June 1957.

³⁰⁵ *Star*, 22.7.1957; A. Paton, *op. cit.*, pp. 276-279.

³⁰⁶ *SA Student* vol. 22 no. 3, June 1957.

³⁰⁷ *ibid.*

³⁰⁸ *ibid.*; J. Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-137, 140.

³⁰⁹ BC 586 O3.1, Gerald (Boulle) to Trevor (Coombe), 19.10.1957, p. 4.

NUSAS continued to join other organisations in opposing the applicable provisions of the Native Laws Amendment Act. However, with the return of Fort Hare and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights it was obliged to co-operate with the ANC too, to the regret of some NUSAS executive members. The ANCYL was suspected of having a 'fairly strong red element in its ranks' while its parent body was allegedly an ineffective force in the fight against the Native Laws Amendment Act.³¹⁰ Despite these reservations, NUSAS was represented at the ANC Native Laws Amendment conference in Cape Town in August 1957 by its politically astute international relations vice-president and UCT SRC president, Neville Rubin.³¹¹ Rubin was sufficiently adroit to ensure that NUSAS's image remained untarnished,³¹² presumably from associating with such a radical black political organisation like the ANC. In some relief, NUSAS judged the ANC initiative a failure but believed that contact with the African nationalist organisation remained important.

Interdenominational African Ministers' Federation (IDAMF) Multi-racial Conference

In a more positive vein, Coombe agreed to co-sponsor and serve on the Education Commission³¹³ of a conference entitled 'Human relations in a multi-racial society' to be held at Wits in December 1957.³¹⁴ Coombe believed that as a racially open organisation committed to certain policies, NUSAS had an obligation to attend the conference which he far-sightedly gauged as having 'immediate and historical importance'.³¹⁵ This 'Multi-racial Conference', as the event became known, was convened by the Interdenominational African Ministers' Federation (IDAMF) to discuss the overtly political resolution passed at their 1956 conference that the only 'guarantee' for 'peaceful and harmonious relations between Black and White' was a non-racial South African citizenship and 'the abolition of discriminatory laws'.³¹⁶ Originally the ANC leadership was to have sponsored the conference,³¹⁷ in accordance with its 'united front' policy, but presumably because of being hamstrung by the Treason Trial, much of the organisation of the event was left to the LP. Thus Alan Paton found sixty individuals³¹⁸ from a diverse range of institutions and political

³¹⁰ BC 586 A2.2, Magnus Gunther to Trevor Coombe, 11.8.1957.

³¹¹ BC 586 A2.2, Magnus Gunther to Trevor Coombe, 8.8.1957; Trevor Coombe to Magnus Gunther, 28.8.1957.

³¹² BC 586 A2.2, Magnus (Gunther) to Trevor Coombe, 5.9.1957.

³¹³ BC 596 T60, N. Rubin to A. Hepple, 12.9.1958; 'Multi-racial Conference of South Africa: Register of Commissions in which participants will sit', nd.

³¹⁴ BC 586 B4.1, Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 31.10.1957; T60, T. Coombe to Chairman of the Planning Committee, Multi-racial Conference of South Africa, 31.10.1957.

³¹⁵ BC 586 B4.1, Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 14.9.1957, pp. 4-5.

³¹⁶ *ibid.*

³¹⁷ BC 586 T60, 'Minutes of a Meeting of Sponsors of the Multi-racial Conference held in the Trades Hall, Week Street, Johannesburg on Monday, 1st September 1957 at 10.am'.

³¹⁸ R. Vigne, *Liberals against apartheid: a history of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 1953-1968*, MacMillan and St Martin's Press, Houndsmill and New York, 1997, p. 77.

parties which included the universities (for example, Makiwane of the Fort Hare SRC), the LP, Labour Party, the ANC and COD to sponsor the event.³¹⁹ The conference unanimously adopted universal adult suffrage and the inclusion of a bill of rights in the constitution of a future democratic South Africa.³²⁰ However, NUSAS only endorsed the educational findings of the conference.³²¹ The education commission's 'Education in a multi-racial society' was hailed as an authoritative commentary on the subject which 'provided justification of NUSAS's fundamental educational policies'.³²² In typical liberal terms, the NUSAS representatives expressed their admiration for the 'genuine air of co-operation'³²³ and 'harmony'³²⁴ which prevailed at the conference which 'showed that people of different races... could still get together.....and decide in a very rational manner what the future of South Africa should be'.³²⁵ Almost as remarkable as the spirit of co-operation prevailing at the conference was the fact that it took place at all. Already some multi-racial organisations had fallen victim to the provisions of the Native Law Amendment Act and been denied permission to hold their gatherings. Perhaps the presence of observers from SABRA lent the IDAMF conference privileged status.

Conclusion

By the end of 1957 then, NUSAS was a substantially different organisation - structurally, ideologically and tactically to what it had been just two years before. With the return of Fort Hare, NUSAS's claim to be a national union of students rang less hollow. The adoption of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights provided the organisation with an ideological foundation and the licence to embark on political activity, absolutely necessary if it were to retain and expand its black membership. The UN Declaration could be compared to the Freedom Charter. Following the adoption of the former, NUSAS moved ideologically closer to the Congresses. In its campaigns against university apartheid and the 'church clause', NUSAS employed the Congresses' radical, unconstitutional methods of struggle and defiance. Ironically for the government, both the Separate Universities Education Bill and the Native Laws Amendment Act were intended to put an end to inter-racial contact and not to foster it as happened with NUSAS and the Congresses. Despite its radicalisation in terms of its tactics and ideological foundation, NUSAS still based its academic freedom campaign on the conservative defence of university autonomy. This

³¹⁹ BC 586 T60, 'Minutes of a Meeting of Sponsors of the Multi-racial Conference held in the Trades Hall, Week Street, Johannesburg on Monday, 1st September 1957 at 10.am'; 'Multi-racial Conference of South Africa: List of Sponsors', nd.

³²⁰ R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

³²¹ BC 586 Congress Minutes 1958, p. 35.

³²² BC 586 B4.1, Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 18.12.1957.

³²³ BC 586 O9.2, Magnus (Gunther) to 'Amanda', 12.12.1957.

³²⁴ BC 586 B4.1, Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 18.12.1957.

³²⁵ BC 586 O9.2, Magnus (Gunther) to 'Amanda', 12.12.1957.

enabled NUSAS to craft a substantial united front against university apartheid which included a significant proportion of its conservative and generally apathetic student base. University autonomy was a limited enough defence to persuade the UP to denounce government plans for the universities and moreover, the UP's support was critical to the success of building a campus united front. However, for black students, the radical left and much of the NUSAS leadership, the tactical expediency of upholding the right of universities to segregate was morally untenable. So too was the inconsistency of the 'open' universities' practice of upholding 'academic non-segregation' but applying campus social segregation. Both of these issues would be debated during the following couple of years and will be discussed in chapter five.

CHAPTER FOUR

National student contact: NUSAS, the *Afrikaanse Studentebond* (ASB) and their affiliates, 1955-1959

Introduction

As shown, NUSAS was established in 1924 to bring together white English- and Afrikaans-speaking students on the basis of their common studentship. By 1956 it was clear that it had quite spectacularly failed to achieve this goal. No student body of any extant Afrikaans-medium university had been officially associated with NUSAS since 1936, all electing instead to be organised into ethnically exclusive Afrikaner nationalist organisations such as the ultra-nationalist *Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond* (ANS) and from 1948 onwards, the *Afrikaanse Studentebond* (ASB), both of which were hostile to NUSAS. NUSAS did not accept this situation. It attempted unsuccessfully to initiate contact and co-operation with the ASB and students at the Afrikaans-medium universities, spurred on in part by the need to respond to the residual broad white South Africanist sentiment within its own ranks. This grew more strident the more racially inclusive and consequently more radical NUSAS became. More importantly, NUSAS was motivated to win the support of students at the Afrikaans-medium institutions for the concept of university autonomy and the right of the open universities to remain open, but to no avail.

By 1956, however, a questioning of the desirability of isolation and a more positive attitude towards contact with other students, both in South Africa and abroad, was discernible within Afrikaans-medium student bodies and the ASB. Linked to this was increasing criticism of the outmodedness of the Christian-National foundation of the ASB and the obstacle this posed to the creation of a new national student organisation constructed on a racial and ethnic basis which many students hoped would come into being following the introduction of university apartheid. Not all NP adherents held that a new organisation was the prerequisite for student co-operation. In 1959, members of the Stellenbosch SRC entered serious, but ultimately failed negotiations with NUSAS to re-affiliate. Had this succeeded and some of the Stellenbosch negotiators not been motivated by the desire to effect a right wing takeover of NUSAS, this would have marked a significant milestone on the road to national student co-operation and the attainment of NUSAS's primary function. For the new prime-minister, Hendrik Verwoerd, this apparent rapprochement with NUSAS and other manifestations of 'liberalism; together with the rejection of university apartheid by a sizeable number of Stellenbosch students on the eve of the enactment of the Extension of University Education Bill, was too much. Through the efforts of orthodox NP members, many of them associated with the newly

formed '*Ruiterweg*', the junior branch of the *Broederbond*, this dissident revolt was suppressed and Stellenbosch was brought back to NP orthodoxy.

The contact and co-operation movement generated its own momentum. Increasing dissatisfaction with the ASB on the Afrikaans-medium campuses led to heightened expectations of white co-operation on the English-medium ones and a concomitant dissatisfaction with NUSAS as an obstacle to this rapprochement. Similarly, these auspicious developments at the English-medium universities generated further optimism for co-operation at the Afrikaans-medium campuses. However, the inter-SRC conferences which followed these developments, all aborted on the refusal of the NUSAS-aligned SRCs to accept apartheid representation. These conferences placed NUSAS in a difficult situation. Even though they posed a potential threat to NUSAS's continued existence, the conferences could not be condemned publicly as NUSAS policy, reaffirmed annually, was committed to student rapprochement. More importantly, these events excluded representatives from black higher educational institutions and could thus not be welcomed particularly as black students and the white left accused NUSAS of ranking white co-operation above that of a committed anti-apartheid programme. Ironically Afrikaans-speaking student leaders accused NUSAS of valuing its small black membership more highly than co-operation with thousands of Afrikaners. NUSAS thus remained aloof from these inter-SRC gatherings and instead pursued contact with Afrikaans-medium centres in an uncompromisingly liberal fashion. NUSAS believed that support for apartheid arose from ignorance and so encouraged its affiliated student bodies to make use of every possible occasion to expose their Afrikaans-speaking counterparts to the realities of apartheid and the benefits of liberalism.¹ Trevor Coombe, the evangelical Christian NUSAS president and sometime Moral Rearmament Movement (MRA) activist believed implicitly in the efficacy of personal contact and thus embarked on a personal proselytization of student leaders at the Afrikaans-medium centres some of whom had also embraced MRA. It could be argued that it was partly due to Coombe's efforts both within and outside the context of the MRA that co-operation advanced to the degree it did in the period between 1956 and 1959. The desire for contact with English-speaking white, and to a lesser extent black, students by their Afrikaans-speaking counterparts reflected debates, developments and realignments within the state, society, political parties and specifically the NP, the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs (SABRA) and other sectors of Afrikaans-speaking society.

¹ BC 586 O1.2, Trevor to 'Des' (?) 23.7.1957.

Background to contact and co-operation

Large scale black resistance during the 1950s revealed that the majority of the population rejected apartheid. Thus many within the NP alliance (particularly SABRA) realised that for apartheid to succeed contact with black leadership, to win it over to the ideology, was a matter of national urgency. Moreover, African nationalism and decolonisation in the rest of the continent with its parallels to black resistance in South Africa was proceeding at a vigorous pace. It was quite clear that within a relatively short period of time most of the European colonial powers would depart the continent, leaving in their wake a string of independent states antagonistic to South Africa and possibly allied to the Union's black majority. Nestled at the tip of a hostile continent, South Africa would have to ally itself with Western Cold War powers, including Afrikaner nationalism's old imperial enemy, Britain. According to Lazar, because Afrikaner nationalists could not throw in their lot with anti-colonial African nationalists without ceding their privileged racial position, Afrikaner nationalism was recast from a struggle against British imperialism to an anti-communist crusade to uphold white Western civilisation, a Western civilisation moreover which Afrikaners had played a significant role in planting in Africa and in which they had a continued stake. Nonetheless, a republic remained a cherished political goal. But political, economic and strategic necessity dictated that this republic, unlike the models proposed during the Second World War, would take a constitutional form, entrench the two official white languages, accept a common white citizenship, win wide white approval and be located within the Commonwealth.²

A common white nationalism was not without its attendant problems. Although, as theorists within the NP alliance and ASB pointed out, Afrikaners controlled the political realm and had made significant inroads into the economy, there was still a danger of English domination. Thus contact and co-operation was not aimed at integration and assimilation or the development of a common white culture, except perhaps the Afrikanerisation of English speakers, but rather at nurturing a common white South African patriotism which most importantly could be flaunted overseas.

The ASB, the Afrikaans-medium centres and contact and co-operation before 1956

One of the greatest concerns of the ASB and other student leaders at the Afrikaans-medium universities was the lack of an Afrikaner nationalist and 'patriotic' South African voice in international student forums. South Africa was represented abroad by NUSAS, which, in the opinion of the ASB, brought South Africa, its government and Afrikaners,

² J. Lazar, 'Conformity and conflict: Afrikaner nationalist politics in South Africa 1948-1961', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1987, pp. 179-180, 312-319, 326, 332-333.

into disrepute. Participation in international student organisations was one of the factors driving students at the Afrikaans-medium universities out of their isolation and seeking contact with others domestically and abroad. In addition to establishing a Nationalist voice abroad, the ASB at its inception in 1948 was prepared to co-operate with separately organised white English-speakers sharing its views³ and for this purpose intended to open branches on the NUSAS-affiliated campuses.⁴ Thus from the beginning, the ASB set itself on a collision course with NUSAS.

The organisation performed dual functions, both as a student benefits trade union⁵ where it planned to challenge the success of NUSAS⁶ (ultimately unsuccessfully), and as a Christian National cultural body.⁷ This 'dualisme', in addition to automatic (*ipso facto*) membership of all students on the Afrikaans campuses, was important to Potchefstroom for religious-political reasons and to Pretoria for the purposes of constructing and controlling a homogeneous Afrikaner nationalist student consciousness. However, these proved problematic to Stellenbosch. Thus unlike its northern counterparts, Stellenbosch was unable to garner sufficient student support to secure its affiliation to the ASB until 1949.⁸ The Stellenbosch student body, being more heterogeneous than those at the other Afrikaans-medium universities, often favoured a broad white South Africanism over an exclusive ethnic Afrikaans identity. Thus it was often more 'enlightened' and open-minded and less fearful of contacts with those outside Afrikanerdom than the insular, 'narrow' Christian Nationalists. Thus in 1949 Stellenbosch students championed in vain the idea that NUSAS be recognised on all the ASB campuses in the hope that this gesture was reciprocated by NUSAS affiliates.⁹ In addition they rejected out of hand the attempt by the northern universities to proscribe intermarriage between English and Afrikaans-speaking whites.¹⁰

Playing an influential role in the thinking of Stellenbosch students was SABRA, its research institution being housed at the university. SABRA 'visionaries' believed that the only morally acceptable form of apartheid was total territorial and economic separation of black and white and the attendant sacrifices to be made by whites to achieve this. They placed great store on the findings of the 1956 Tomlinson Commission, an ambitious research undertaking (in which many of them were involved) aimed at establishing the

³ *Star*, 16.8.1948; *Die Burger*, 16.8.1948.

⁴ *Die Burger*, 5.8.1948.

⁵ *Die Matie*, 18.8.1950.

⁶ *Die Perdeby*, 18.6.1948.

⁷ J. Fick, 'Afrikaner student politics – past and present', H. van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds), *Student perspectives on South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1972, p. 57.

⁸ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1949, p. 28.

⁹ *Die Perdeby*, 2.9.1949; *Die Matie*, 5.8.1949.

¹⁰ *Die Matie*, 5.8.1949.

means by which the reserves could be developed into economically viable entities capable of adequately providing for the majority of South Africa's black population. With the rightless urban African population increasing rather than diminishing in size and black resistance against apartheid unlikely to recede in the face of this, as well as the looming independence of Ghana and other African states, time was running out (less than a generation or even ten years it was feared) for a solution to South Africa's race problem and ultimately the survival of a white Afrikaner nation. Thus, for SABRA 'visionaries' it was imperative that Afrikaner nationalism reach out to the black population and persuade its members of the merits, justice and honesty of apartheid.¹¹ Much of SABRA visionary thought regarding the provision of an ethical basis for apartheid and Afrikaner nationalism was derived from the concepts of 'survival in justice' and 'liberal nationalism' arrived at by the Afrikaans poet and public intellectual, N.P. van Wyk Louw. Louw rejected the application to South Africa of liberal democracy, a doctrine which had arisen in ethnically homogenous societies, as it could lead to the deprivation of the freedom and eventually the demise of numerically small nations like the Afrikaner. However, liberalism was too important a doctrine to reject and should thus co-exist with nationalism. Black nationalism had as much right as white (Afrikaner) nationalism to its freedom. The conflict arising from competing nationalisms could be resolved by allowing each nation the right to develop and enjoy its freedom separately. Moreover, South Africa was composed of many nations.¹² If a nation concluded that it 'need not exist in justice with other ethnic groups', it had reached a crisis.¹³ With the uncertainty of Afrikanerdom's future, seeking contacts with other nations became important policy for SABRA visionaries. A commitment to stage a conference of black leaders was made at the 1956 *Volkskongres* on the 'Future of the Bantu', an event sponsored by SABRA, the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings* and the churches¹⁴ and attended by other constituencies within the NP fold, including the ASB and its affiliated SRCs.

In 1953 the chairman of SABRA urged delegates to the ASB annual congress to practise apartheid in their everyday lives as most people did so only for 'egotistical' [sic] rather than altruistic reasons.¹⁵ Accordingly, the ASB adopted the SABRA visionary position of

¹¹ J. Lazar, 'Verwoerd versus the 'visionaries': the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs and apartheid, 1948-1961', P. Bonner, P. Delius and D. Posel (eds), *Apartheid's genesis 1935-1962*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1993, pp. 363-373.

¹² H. Giliomee, 'Apartheid, verligtheid and liberalism', J. Butler, R. Elphick and D. Welsh (eds), *Democratic liberalism in South Africa, its history and prospect*, Wesleyan University Press and David Philip, Middletown and Cape Town, 1987, pp. 367-369; H. Giliomee, "'Survival in justice": an Afrikaner debate over apartheid', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 36 no. 3, July 1994, p. 532.

¹³ H. Giliomee, "Survival in justice", *op. cit.*, pp. 531-532.

¹⁴ J. Lazar, 'Verwoerd versus the 'visionaries'', *op. cit.*, pp. 376, 380.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 369-370; *Rand Daily Mail*, 8.5.1953.

total apartheid¹⁶ and in a gesture denounced as 'liberal welfarism' by the *baasskap* right, endowed a bursary to a student studying at Fort Hare.¹⁷ However, the ASB would not accede to the request of Stellenbosch and the UOFS in 1954 that it abolish its *ipso facto* membership and transform itself into a purely ideological cultural organisation for adherents of Christian Nationalism.¹⁸ Nor would it agree to the establishment of a non-sectarian, non-political national student federation which could include students at Pietermaritzburg and Rhodes unhappy with NUSAS.¹⁹ Nonetheless, a theoretically racially open South African Federation of Student Unions came into existence, but faded into oblivion after its inaugural conference.²⁰ The ideas behind it, however, namely that Afrikaans-speaking students should come out of their isolation and pursue all avenues of contact with white English-speaking and black students, did not.

It was this desire for contact that led the Stellenbosch SRC to support the Wits SRC's campaign against a statutory SRC in 1955 and to consider accepting the invitation issued annually by NUSAS to attend its 1955 congress.²¹ Ultimately this invitation was declined but did lead to the ASB president pondering whether his organisation's traditional policy of ignoring NUSAS was the most effective means of fighting it.²² Shortly thereafter, the ASB resolved to investigate all avenues which might lead to contact with white English-speaking and black students. To placate those opposed to and/or fearful of contact, it was understood that this interaction would be on terms posing no threat to Afrikaner identity and independence.²³

Thwarting the ASB's efforts to secure international recognition

Emerging from isolation and finding a voice in international student forums assumed the greatest urgency for Stellenbosch and the ASB in 1955. By this time NUSAS was playing an increasingly prominent role in the ISC and using this body to denounce the South African government's apartheid education policy.²⁴ This was deplored by both the government and the ASB, the former consequently refusing to renew the passport of Sidney Katz, LP member and NUSAS vice-president for international relations mandated

¹⁶ *Die Matie*, 15.5.1953.

¹⁷ *Die Perdeby*, 5.5.1954; 14.5.1954; 21.5.1954; 11.6.1954.

¹⁸ *Die Matie*, 30.7.1954; *Die Perdeby*, 21.5.1954; *SA Student* vol. 20 no. 1, August 1954.

¹⁹ *Die Matie*, 29.4.1954; 30.7.1954; *Die Perdeby*, 21.5.1954; *SA Student* vol. 20 no. 1, August 1954.

²⁰ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1954, p. 7; B1 Presidential Report 1955, pp. 27-28.

²¹ *Die Matie*, 5.8.1955; Jan Loubser to *Die Matie*, 17.6.1955.

²² Jan Loubser to *Die Matie*, 17.6.1955.

²³ *Die Matie*, 5.8.1958.

²⁴ *SA Student* vol. 19 no. 4, March 1954.

to attend the Fifth ISC in Birmingham in June 1955.²⁵ NUSAS believed that this was an intimidatory tactic aimed at ensuring that only the NP voice was heard overseas.²⁶

Ostensibly (see below) presenting the views of the government at the Birmingham ISC, was the ASB.²⁷ Although winning the support of student unions from the former British dominions as well as from some in Western Europe, the ASB failed to win the coveted 'observer' status and was designated a 'visitor' because NUSAS (still an observer) with its open membership criteria and allegedly greater numbers, was recognised as representing South Africa.²⁸ The ASB believed however that the real reasons for NUSAS being preferred to the ASB were that the ISC feared NUSAS might return to the IUS (it was still an associate member of the IUS at the beginning of the ISC) as might other wavering national unions if the ASB was admitted. Moreover, it believed that NUSAS had effectively poisoned the ISC against the Afrikaans organisation by translating one of its anti-NUSAS articles into English and submitting it to the international body.²⁹ Despite this setback, those within the ASB in favour of ending isolation (and not all were - particularly those at Pretoria and Potchefstroom) remained optimistic that membership was only a matter of time. This would depend on the ASB making itself known overseas and putting its house in order with regard to its relationships with black and English-speaking white students as well as NUSAS.³⁰

NUSAS also feared that the ASB's membership bid might succeed. Firstly, the ASB representative, David Bosch, had made a very good impression at Birmingham.³¹ Bosch was a former president of the Pretoria SRC undertaking postgraduate studies at the University of Basel,³² who as a missionary and academic would later assume a leading anti-apartheid role within the Dutch Reformed Church. Probably unknown to the ASB, NUSAS and the ISC, Bosch had already rejected apartheid³³ and thus probably did not accurately present the views of the ASB and the government to the ISC. Secondly, the changing international situation favoured the ASB. In response to the thaw in the Cold War, many student unions (particularly the Canadian) attempted to rekindle world student unity and hoped to woo, among others, students from Eastern Europe into the ISC. As an organisation committed to democracy, the ISC's definition of democracy would have to be

²⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1955, Appendix B, p. 5; *Werda* October 1955, p. 26.

²⁶ *Rand Daily Mail*, 4.7.1955.

²⁷ *Die Matie*, 5.8.1955.

²⁸ *Werda*, October 1955, p. 26.

²⁹ Jan Loubser, 'Birmingham – quo vadis?', *Werda*, October 1955, p. 11; *Werda*, October 1955, p. 26.

³⁰ *Die Matie*, 18.5.1956.

³¹ BC 586 A2.3, John Didcott to Roslyn (Traub), Toffee (Katz), Ernie (Wentzel) and John H (Horn), 18.11.1955.

³² *Irawa*, June 1955.

³³ 'Bosch, David Jacobus 1929-1992 Dutch Reformed Church South Africa', 'Dictionary of African Christian biography', http://www.dacb.org/stories/southafrica/legacy_bosch.html accessed 21.9.2014.

more loosely interpreted than in the past so as to accommodate the Eastern European student unions. By logical extension then, exceptions would also have to be made for student bodies from fascist Spain and apartheid South Africa. The French student union, which was sensitive to possible criticism of its government's colonial policy in Algeria, was particularly sympathetic to the cause of ASB membership.³⁴

Although at this time the ISC, like NUSAS, followed a 'students-as-such' policy³⁵ and thus limited its activities to the educational sphere and accordingly refrained from judging its membership's domestic political arrangements, the ASB's support for university apartheid could count against it. Already by 1954 the ISC had pledged support for NUSAS's academic freedom campaign and had thus denounced apartheid in education in South Africa as well as violations of university autonomy elsewhere.³⁶ However, realising that it could not pass judgement on countries about which it was politically ignorant, the ISC constituted a Research and Investigation Commission (RIC), tasked with investigating the suppression of academic freedom in South Africa, East Germany and Venezuela.³⁷ The ASB rejected the RIC as an unconstitutional interference in the domestic affairs of a state and moreover, illegitimate, as it owed its origin to the unrepresentative NUSAS.³⁸ The ASB then invited its own ('fascist' in the opinion of a former NUSAS leader) RIC from the 'stamlande' (the Netherlands and Belgium) to investigate conditions in South Africa and set the record straight.³⁹ This became even more urgent when, following an address by NUSAS-affiliated student leaders at Oxford in late 1955,⁴⁰ the foundations were laid for a university-wide anti-university apartheid committee in the United Kingdom.⁴¹

Thus to put its case across to potential allies, the ASB undertook a successful cultural concert tour to Europe in December 1955⁴² resulting in its members gaining entrance to a Belgian student conference where, the NUSAS president surmised, they might have found 'an opportunity for some chicanery'.⁴³ The ASB and the Afrikaans universities intensified their relationship with student organisations in the 'Dietslande' of the

³⁴ BC 586 A2.3, John Didcott to Roslyn (Traub), Toffee (Katz), Ernie (Wentzel) and John H (Horn), 18.11.1955.

³⁵ T. Nilsson, 'Students as cold warriors – the international student movement during the Cold War', <http://blogg.thomasnilsson.eu/2004/12/students-as-cold-warriors-international.html> accessed 23.6.2009.

³⁶ *SA Student* vol. 19 no. 4, March 1954.

³⁷ *ibid.*; vol. 22 no. 3, 3.6.1956; *Dome* vol. 10 no. 3, June 1956; "n Objektiewe rapport oor die Suid Afrikaanse kleurvraagstuk deur 'n kommissie van die 'International Students Conference", *Werda* no. 3, October 1955, p. 9.

³⁸ *Die Matie*, 18.5.1956; 15.6.1956.

³⁹ The 'stamlande' were the countries of origin of the Afrikaner nation. *Nux* no. 3, 21.6.1956; *Die Matie*, 17.8.1956; *Irawa*, May 1956.

⁴⁰ *Die Wapad*, 7.6.1956.

⁴¹ *SA Student* vol. 23 no. 3, June 1956.

⁴² *Die Matie*, 5.8.1955; 20.4.1956; 18.5.1956; *Die Wapad*, 26.6.1956.

⁴³ BC 586 A2.3, 'EMW' (Ernie Wentzel) to John (Didcott), 20.4.1956.

Netherlands, Belgium and Germany,⁴⁴ and inaugurated student exchanges between Afrikaans universities and those abroad.⁴⁵ It also became a regular contributor to the *World Student News*, the official organ of the ISC.

Despite its continuing misgivings about the liberal, internationalist flavour of the ISC,⁴⁶ the very antithesis of Afrikaner nationalism, the ASB believed there were many student unions within the ISC sympathetic to the cultural aspirations of the Afrikaner, thus more than justifying membership. The ASB thus set about fulfilling the requirements for ISC 'delegate' status. In order to claim the largest student membership in South Africa, the ASB embarked on a massive recruitment drive. It attempted to sign up all the Afrikaans-medium training colleges,⁴⁷ as well as students at the bilingual Natal Training College in Pietermaritzburg, jeopardising further NUSAS's unstable relationship there.⁴⁸ At a time when there was a possibility of Rhodes disaffiliating from NUSAS, the ASB attempted to establish a branch there too.⁴⁹ The SRC feared that the ASB might be successful, as it had opportunistically offered to open its membership to students of all races at this wholly white campus.⁵⁰

In order to regularise its relationship with the black population, the ASB invited a moderate coloured political leader to address its 1956 congress⁵¹ and finally acceded to the demand of Stellenbosch that contact be made with black students.⁵² At a time when most black higher educational institutions were outside NUSAS because it was too moderate, the ASB naively discussed the possibility of creating a separate black student organisation to counter NUSAS.⁵³ To oppose NUSAS among white English-speaking students, the ASB decided to call a conference of all white university SRCs to discuss the 'calling and duty of a university'.⁵⁴ These were the only positive responses to the plea of

⁴⁴ *Die Matie*, 5.8.1955; 19.8.1955; 20.4.1956; 18.5.1956.

⁴⁵ *Die Perdeby*, 13.6.1958.

⁴⁶ *Werda*, April 1955.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*; *Die Matie*, 5.8.9.1955.

⁴⁸ BC 586 B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 28.3.1956. NTC disaffiliated from NUSAS in 1953. (BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1953, p. 15) Nonetheless, NUSAS retained contact with the college via UNP. The NTC principal would not allow discussion of either NUSAS or the ASB 'because of [the]trouble it would cause' amongst the mixed white student body, but agreed that once the last Afrikaans-speaking students had relocated to the new Afrikaans-medium Durban Training College, re-affiliation would be considered. BC 586 B4.1, 'Report on the Executive Visit paid by Mr Wentzel (President) and Mr Rubin (Vice-Pres. for International Relations) to Rhodes, Grahamstown Train. Coll., Fort Hare, Univ. of Natal (Durban European, Non-European, Pietermaritzburg and the Medical School) and Natal Training College', 30.3.1957, p. 9; B3 Executive Minutes 1957, p. 3.

⁴⁹ *Rhodeo* vol. 10 no. 5, 4.10.1956.

⁵⁰ BC 586 B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 5.9.1956. 'All races' could have meant 'all white races' which in itself was a departure from ASB white separatism.

⁵¹ *Die Matie*, 3.5.1957.

⁵² *Die Matie*, 20.4.1956; *Die Matie*, 'Dink Revolusioner- leef gevaarlik', <http://academic.sun.ac.za/journalism/siji/1995/matie.htm> accessed 13.1.2009.

⁵³ *Die Wapad*, 26.6.1956.

⁵⁴ *SA Student* vol. 21 no. 2, May 1956.

Johan van der Vyver, the SABRA-inclined ASB vice-president and later human rights lawyer, that the ASB abandon isolation in South Africa and abroad as a matter of urgency and reach out to 'well-disposed non-whites'⁵⁵ and also 'right-thinking' white English-speakers in NUSAS's 'empire' too.⁵⁶ On balance though, the 1956 ASB congress was inward looking and reactionary.⁵⁷ Probably influenced by his contact with NUSAS-affiliated SRC presidents on the Abe Bailey Travel Bursary,⁵⁸ Tom Langley, a past-president of the Pretoria SRC and later a leading member of the Conservative Party, successfully introduced a number of resolutions, among them that the work of NUSAS be exposed and that liberalism, communism and Catholicism represented the greatest threats to the Afrikaner as they all aimed at world domination.⁵⁹ With its implicit authoritarianism and threats to freedom of religion,⁶⁰ this second resolution was given full exposure by NUSAS in press releases⁶¹ and its publications.⁶² Thus, ASB leaders for some years to come were forced to explain that their organisation upheld freedom of religion as indicated in its draft republican guidelines and that the Catholic Church was censured for its 'political' encouragement of integration and not for its religious beliefs.⁶³ More damning to the ASB in its quest for ISC membership was its refusal to accede to the ISC's request that it persuade the South African government to grant visas to the RIC team⁶⁴ which had earlier been declined. In addition, the 1956 ASB congress called on the government to implement university apartheid.⁶⁵ Ernie Wentzel concluded that the ASB had 'torpedoed' itself without the help of NUSAS and there was thus no more reason to be concerned about it in the international field.⁶⁶ However, as a precaution, NUSAS did have an article entitled 'ASB demands university segregation' placed in the ISC's *Information Bulletin*⁶⁷ and NUSAS-affiliated SRCs passed resolutions deploring the ASB's action.⁶⁸

⁵⁵ 'goedgesinde nie-blanke'; *Die Matie*, 20.4.1956; *Irawa*, May 1956.

⁵⁶ *Die Matie*, 20.4.1956; *Werda*, June 1956, p. 24.

⁵⁷ *Die Matie*, 20.4.1956.

⁵⁸ These were: Ernie Wentzel, liberal past-president of the UCT SRC and current NUSAS president; John Horn, Catholic president of the UCT SRC and a vice-president of NUSAS; Bob Hepple, past-president of the Wits SRC and a COD activist. BC 586 A2.3, unsigned (?) E. Wentzel to John (Didcott), 12.4.1956.

⁵⁹ *Die Matie*, 20.4.1956; *Irawa*, May 1956; *Werda*, June 1956, p. 24.

⁶⁰ D. Potter to *Die Matie*, 9.8.1957.

⁶¹ 'Press Release', BC 586 B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 9.4.1956.

⁶² *Nux* no. 2, 18.5.1956; *SA Student* vol. 23 no. 3, June 1956.

⁶³ Johann van der Vyver to *Die Matie*, 23.8.1957. Van der Vyver was to become a human rights law scholar. He was forced to leave Potchefstroom in the 1970s and took up posts at Wits and an African-American university. He would appear before the US congress to plead for the eventual adoption of a convention which would guarantee absolute religious freedom and tolerance. <http://www.law.emory.edu/faculty/faculty-profiles/johan-d-van-der-vyver.html> accessed 3.2.2011.

⁶⁴ *Die Burger*, 5.4.1956; *Nux* no. 3, 21.6.1956.

⁶⁵ *SA Student* vol. 21 no. 2, May 1956.

⁶⁶ BC 586 B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 9.4.1956.

⁶⁷ BC 586 A2.3, Ernie (Wentzel) to John (Didcott), 20.4.1956.

⁶⁸ BC 586 O6.1, Wits SRC Minutes, 17.4.1956, p. 7.

What had NUSAS done to stymie the ASB's membership of the ISC? It had compiled an initially secret memorandum to submit to the international body detailing the national union's relationship with the Afrikaans-medium universities and NUSAS's right to be regarded as the legitimate representative of South Africa overseas. In this memorandum, based on the NUSAS archive and Tobias's 1948 'History', it quite unambiguously demonstrates that students at the Afrikaans-medium universities, under the influence of extreme nationalism were responsible for destroying South African student unity when they broke ties with the national union in 1933 and rebuffed any attempts at reconciliation or contact initiated thereafter by NUSAS. This refuted the ASB version of the break which alleged that NUSAS's intention to invite Fort Hare into the national union and its preference for a few black students ('troetelkindertjies': 'favourites' or 'pets') over thousands of Afrikaners, pushed Afrikaans-speakers out.⁶⁹ To strengthen the NUSAS case,⁷⁰ the memorandum highlighted the undemocratic and fascist nature of the ASB's forerunners and by implication that of the ASB itself. The memorandum also chronicled the Nazification of the ANS, its incorporation into the Nazi OB, the at one time close co-operation of the pro-Nazi NP with the OB and the acts of minor sabotage committed by the OB.⁷¹ This precipitated a debate within the NUSAS leadership⁷² as to whether sufficient evidence existed to substantiate, in the case of a possible defamation suit, the allegations that the NP 'as an organisation' (underlined in the original) was pro-Nazi and that the OB 'as an organisation' had committed sabotage.⁷³ As a precaution then, OB sabotage was omitted and the pro-Nazi NP was amended to read that 'members of the NP' were 'pro-Nazi'.⁷⁴ This was a particularly effective weapon against the ASB because, as Nico Smith points out, one of the first tasks of the *Broederbond* in 1948 was to destroy all documentary evidence of OB sabotage and Afrikaner nationalism's relationship with Nazi Germany.⁷⁵ The ASB itself in its histories of Afrikaner student movements makes no mention of the OB or the ideological direction of the student movement during the war.⁷⁶ In one version, it claims erroneously that the ANS became part of the *Nasionalejeugbond* and by implication the NP,⁷⁷ and not the *Boerejeug* of the OB.

⁶⁹ Jan Loubser to *Die Matie*, 17.6.1955; John Didcott to *Die Matie*, 5.8.1955.

⁷⁰ BC 586 A2.3, John (Didcott) to Roslyn (Traub) and Ernie (Wentzel), 29.3.1956.

⁷¹ BC 586 A2.3, Ernie (Wentzel) to John (Didcott), 21.3.1956.

⁷² *ibid.*; BC 586 A2.3, John (Didcott) to Roslyn (Traub) and Ernie (Wentzel), 29.3.1956; 'EMW' (Ernie Wentzel) to J. Didcott, 12.4.1956; na. (?) E. Wentzel to John (Didcott), 7.5.1956.

⁷³ BC 586 A2.3, Ernie (Wentzel) to John (Didcott), 21.3.1956.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*; BC 586 A2.3, John (Didcott) to Roslyn (Traub) and Ernie (Wentzel), 29.3.1956.

⁷⁵ N. Smith, *Die Afrikaner Broederbond: belewinge van die binnekant*, Lapa Uitgewers, Pretoria, 2009, p. 27.

⁷⁶ 'Historiese oorsig oor studente-organisasies in SA', *Die Perdeby*, 6.6.1958.

⁷⁷ Jan Loubser to *Die Matie*, 17.6.1955.

The memorandum was distributed to all South African SRCs. Despite NUSAS leaders' fears that there might be an angry response from the Afrikaans student bodies,⁷⁸ the Potchefstroom SRC dismissed it as merely a 'meagre' effort.⁷⁹ The ASB appeared however to be concerned at the 'large number of flagrant misrepresentations' made about the organisation and the 'stress on its "Nazi past"'⁸⁰ (inverted commas in the original) and requested a list of all the national unions to which NUSAS had sent the document as it planned to respond to it.⁸¹ As far as its affiliated SRCs were concerned, NUSAS hoped that its memorandum would be powerful enough - though not so negative that it would have the opposite effect - to dissuade those SRCs of whose loyalties it was doubtful (including erroneously the new Wits statutory SRC), of agreeing to participate in the apartheid-type student organisation envisaged by the proposed ASB inter-SRC conference. The memorandum was ultimately destined, along with the report of the RIC commission, for discussion at the forthcoming ISC in Ceylon in September 1956.⁸²

The Research and Investigation Commission (RIC)

The RIC was another weapon with which NUSAS could prevent the ASB acquiring membership of the ISC. This was intended to be an independent, impartial investigation into South African higher education conducted under the auspices of the ISC.⁸³ However, Didcott, the previous NUSAS president, based at the Leiden headquarters of COSEC was privy to confidential information about the RIC and even played a role in the selection of the final team to visit South Africa.⁸⁴ The first RIC commissioners were denied South African visas.⁸⁵ To make it more difficult for the South African government to do the same again, the new team was carefully assembled and eventually comprised Harry Brinkman, a Dutch Calvinist, Cyril Ritchie, of Northern Ireland who had chaired the Birmingham ISC ASB debate at which David Bosch was present,⁸⁶ and Olaf Tandberg from Norway.⁸⁷

The RIC commissioners received their visas and arrived in South Africa in May 1956 much to the surprise of the NUSAS leadership⁸⁸ who, after the ASB congress, had

⁷⁸ BC 586 A2.3, John (Didcott) to Roslyn (Traub), Ernie (Wentzel) and John H (Horne), 1.5.1956.

⁷⁹ 'powerige'; *Die Wapad*, 23.5.1956.

⁸⁰ 'groot aantal skrewe wanvoorstellings'; 'klem op sy "Nazi verlede"; *Werda*, September 1956, pp. 21, 24.

⁸¹ BC 586 B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 24.5.1956; *Werda*, September 1956, p. 24.

⁸² *Nux* no. 4, 16.8.1956.

⁸³ BC 586 A2.3, John Didcott to Ernie (Wentzel) and John H (Horne), 3.5.1956; B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 24.5.1956.

⁸⁴ BC 586 A2.3, John Didcott to Roslyn (Traub), Toffee (Katz), Ernie (Wentzel) and John H (Horne), 18.11.1955.

⁸⁵ *Werda*, October 1955.

⁸⁶ BC 586 A2.3, John (Didcott) to Roslyn (Traub), Toffee (Katz), Ernie (Wentzel) and John H (Horne), 18.11.1955.

⁸⁷ BC 596 B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 24.5.1956.

⁸⁸ BC 586 A2.3, John (Didcott) to Ernie (Wentzel) and John H (Horne), 3.5.1956; Ernie (Wentzel) to John (Didcott), 7.5.1956.

expected that the ISC investigation would either be replaced by the ASB's 'carefully selected fascist team' or arrive after the former had completed its investigation.⁸⁹ The team was to visit all South African universities and interview rectors, principals, academic staff, student organisations, as well as representatives of the government and political parties, including the ANC and South African Indian Congress and influential South Africans.⁹⁰ The team was particularly interested in meeting black students and Didcott accordingly confidentially advised NUSAS to make as much time available for this as possible when the national union was officially interviewed. Bishop Ambrose Reeves volunteered to assemble his group of influential liberals for the RIC to meet. However, things did not go entirely smoothly for NUSAS. Brinkman proved 'difficult' and 'domineering' and was probably not won over despite Didcott's warning that NUSAS would need to present a very strong case to him. Brinkman was the son of the Netherlands ambassador to South Africa and supported separate but equal apartheid. He moreover did not believe that NUSAS should have sole representation at the ISC but should form part of a national delegation.⁹¹ Brinkman made the observation to the Wits SRC that all races in South Africa were sincerely working towards a solution to the country's problems and that news reports on South Africa overseas were biased, creating the impression, for example, that Africans were removed from Sophiatown at gunpoint.⁹²

On the other hand, Brinkman and Afrikaans student leaders appeared to strike up a good rapport, Brinkman returning later to study at Stellenbosch.⁹³ When visas were granted, all SRCs at the Afrikaans-medium universities agreed to meet the RIC team⁹⁴ as they were not 'shy' or 'ashamed' of discussing their political beliefs.⁹⁵ They did however inform the commissioners that they regarded the investigation as unconstitutional and illegitimate and warned them that it was impossible to understand the complexity of South African society within a period of three weeks.⁹⁶ The reason for the change of attitude of both the ASB and government could probably be attributed to the actions of the previous RIC team. Though denied visas to come to South Africa, its members nonetheless compiled a report based on liberal historical and sociological texts as well as statements made by NUSAS which were all seriously critical of apartheid and Afrikaner nationalism.⁹⁷ Thus the

⁸⁹ BC 586 A2.3, John (Didcott) to Ernie (Wentzel) and John H (Horne), 3.5.1956.

⁹⁰ BC 586 B4.1, E. Wentzel to the Executive, 24.5.1956; *SA Student* vol. 21 no. 3, June 1956.

⁹¹ BC 586 A2.1, Neville (Rubin) to 'Leon' (?), 6.9.1956.

⁹² *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 8 no. 4, August 1956.

⁹³ *Die Matie*, 5.4.1957.

⁹⁴ *Die Matie*, 18.5.1956; *Die Perdeby*, 10.8.1956.

⁹⁵ *Die Matie*, 18.5.1956.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*; *Die Perdeby*, 10.8.1956.

⁹⁶ *Die Matie*, 15.6.1956.

⁹⁷ "n "Objektiewe" rapport oor die Suid-Afrikaanse kleurvraagstuk deur 'n kommissie van die "International Students Conference", *Werda*, October 1955, pp. 9-10.

ASB and the government decided to allow the new RIC team in and win it over to the NP point of view.

At Stellenbosch, in addition to meeting the rector and SRC, the RIC team interviewed members of the academic staff and SABRA.⁹⁸ While in Pretoria, the commissioners held discussions with the ASB's Langley and visited the Union Buildings, the Voortrekker Monument, the African township, Atteridgeville as well as some informal settlements.⁹⁹ In addition they met apartheid ideologues, Eiselen and De Wet Nel of the Native Affairs Department, as well as Van der Walt, the chairperson of the newly appointed Interdepartmental Commission on university apartheid¹⁰⁰ (discussed in chapter three).

The ASB was questioned about its views on the implementation of university apartheid as well as its relationship with NUSAS.¹⁰¹ The organisation used this opportunity to denigrate the national union, Salmon van Tonder of Pretoria alleging that two-thirds of the executive was communist. The avowedly liberal and anti-communist NUSAS leadership, which had recently voted against COD activist, Bob Hepple taking up the vacant vice-presidency, seriously considered suing Van Tonder for this dangerous slander. The moderate Stellenbosch-based ASB president, Jan Loubser, informed the RIC that NUSAS did not fulfil the ISC's constitutional requirements for the status of a national union as it did not represent all the students in its country, in particular, Afrikaans-speakers.¹⁰² Loubser cautiously concluded that were the RIC team objective, something positive could come of its visit and on the basis of the evidence, the ISC might conclude that South Africa was a 'plural' or 'multi-group' ('meergroepige') society,¹⁰³ which presumably would justify the application of apartheid. The ASB had earlier reasoned that with greater and more widespread knowledge of it and its stance, its support for apartheid would not preclude it from full participation in international student fora.¹⁰⁴ Following the conclusion of the RIC investigation, this was presumably now the case.

However, the RIC team did not uphold apartheid despite the pro-ASB slant of Brinkman. The report was compiled by the other commissioners after Brinkman had retired to bed and was then presented to him each morning for ratification.¹⁰⁵ The report concluded that racially segregated higher education could never lead to equal education for all. It found that there were 'no valid educational, economic or ethical reasons for any university in

⁹⁸ *Die Matie*, 15.6.1956.

⁹⁹ *Die Perdeby*, 10.8.1956.

¹⁰⁰ *SA Student* vol. 21 no. 3, June 1956.

¹⁰¹ *Die Matie*, 15.6.1956.

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Die Matie*, 15.6.1956.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, 18.5.1956.

¹⁰⁵ BC 586 A2.1, Neville Rubin to 'Leon' (?), 6.9.1956.

South Africa to discriminate in its admissions policy'. It thus rejected the Natal system and the ASB's adapted Natal system for coloured students at UCT, namely 'to segregate once admitted'.¹⁰⁶ Based on the recommendations of the RIC Report, the Ceylon ISC committed itself to large-scale aid to both the NUSAS academic freedom campaign and black education in South Africa.

The Ceylon ISC was attended by NUSAS and the ASB. The latter prepared a statement to be read at the conference to the effect that it represented the cultural interests of white Afrikaans-speaking students¹⁰⁷ and thus by implication could not claim to be a national union of students.¹⁰⁸ This admission, coupled with the decision of the 1956 NUSAS assembly, in the absence of the radical left, to apply for full membership of COSEC,¹⁰⁹ paved the way for NUSAS achieving delegate status in the ISC. This was accomplished with ease, with only one student union disputing NUSAS's claim to be a national union.¹¹⁰ Evidently the NUSAS tactics of presenting as strong a public relations exercise as the ASB and not treating the Afrikaans organisation in an aggressive, 'unseemly' fashion,¹¹¹ paid off. The ASB was not so lucky, despite dispatching its intellectually and morally formidable vice-president, Van der Vyver, to the gathering instead of the original candidate who NUSAS had regarded as an easy opponent.¹¹² Since the Birmingham Conference, NUSAS, aided by its British allies, had been considering having observer status at the ISC abolished.¹¹³ However, those student unions, particularly the Canadian, wishing to entice IUS members into the Western organisation, were opposed to this as it would deny the Eastern unions a voice. With the 'odd bit of skulduggery' on his part, Rubin and some of the COSEC leadership were instrumental in having observer status abolished¹¹⁴ without arousing the suspicion of either member unions or the ASB. The ASB for its part replied to the well-received NUSAS memorandum in terms which 'antagonised' everyone and made the organisation appear 'stupid'.¹¹⁵ Thus the Afrikaans organisation again failed in its application to acquire delegate status and, as at Birmingham, was designated 'visitor' with speaking rights.¹¹⁶ In the opinion of Coombe, the ASB's decision to mount a very public campaign against the Soviet invasion of

¹⁰⁶ BC 586 B4.1, 'Recommendations of commission on bases of co-operation - reports of the Research and Investigation Commission', nd.

¹⁰⁷ *Die Matie*, 31.8.1956.

¹⁰⁸ BC 586 A2.3, na.(?) Neville Rubin to John Didcott, 8.10.1956.

¹⁰⁹ *New Age*, 26.7.1956.

¹¹⁰ BC 586 A2.3, 'NR' (Neville Rubin) to John Didcott, 8.10.1956.

¹¹¹ BC 586 A2.1, Ernie (Wentzel) to Neville (Rubin) and Trevor (Coombe), 10.9.1956.

¹¹² *ibid.*; 10.6.1956.

¹¹³ BC 586 A2.1, Neville (Rubin) to nn., 27.7.1956; Ernie (Wentzel) to Neville (Rubin) and Trevor (Coombe), 10.9.1956.

¹¹⁴ BC 586 A2.3, 'NR' (Neville Rubin) to John (Didcott), 8.10.1956.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*; *Die Matie*, 20.9.1957.

Hungary in November 1956 and the suppression of academic freedom and students' rights there was taken to boost the organisation's international standing.¹¹⁷

NUSAS-affiliated campuses and the desire for white co-operation, 1956-7

While Coombe, NUSAS stalwart at Pietermaritzburg, was away from the campus attending the ISC and World University Services meetings, a motion that Pietermaritzburg disaffiliate from NUSAS was initiated without warning by SRC members, Alistair Verbeeck and Eelso Boonstra.¹¹⁸ Like others present at the 1956 NUSAS congress,¹¹⁹ Verbeeck had expressed concern over the lack of progress regarding co-operation with Afrikaans-speaking students, but the NUSAS president had not interpreted this as antagonism towards the national union.¹²⁰ Subsequently however, the UNP SRC accepted no mandates from the NUSAS congress other than those of a purely student benefit nature¹²¹ and like the SRCs of Wits and UCT which were reining in their left and right wings respectively, laid down strict voting guidelines for the SRC at future NUSAS gatherings.¹²² Moreover, UNP effectively abolished centre affiliation to NUSAS by requiring those interested in the national union to register their membership during the forthcoming SRC elections.¹²³

A well-attended, rowdy mass meeting was convened to decide the fate of NUSAS at Pietermaritzburg. The proposer of the disaffiliation motion, Boonstra, who usually abstained from voting on NUSAS issues at SRC meetings,¹²⁴ argued that UNP should prioritise the primary function of a national student union, (co-operation amongst all university students) and sacrifice the secondary function (the specific principles for which NUSAS stood) in favour of reconciliation with Afrikaans-speakers.¹²⁵ In further justification for secession, Boonstra contended that NUSAS was not a national organisation as it represented only white English-speakers and a few black students. Moreover, he averred, UNP could 'make no progress' in the NUSAS assembly as it abstained from voting because it either disagreed with or was not interested in the wide range of NUSAS activities.¹²⁶ Few spoke in favour of the otherwise well-argued motion. This was in sharp contrast to the strong defence of the national union mounted by NUSAS activists. NUSAS loyalists asserted that membership of the national union could not be sacrificed for the

¹¹⁷ BC 586 A2.1, Trevor (Coombe) to Neville (Rubin), 13.11.1956.

¹¹⁸ BC 586 A2.3, Ernie (Wentzel) to John (Didcott), 22.8.1956; O3.1, A. Verbeeck, 'Report of the president to the General Meeting of August 1956'.

¹¹⁹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 8 no. 4, August 1956.

¹²⁰ BC 586 A2.3, Ernie (Wentzel) to John (Didcott), 22.8.1956.

¹²¹ BC 586 O3.1, A. Verbeeck, 'Report of the president to the General Meeting of August 1956', p. 3.

¹²² *ibid.*

¹²³ *ibid.*; BC 568 O3.1, 'Janice' (?) to Ernie (Wentzel), 22.8.1956.

¹²⁴ BC 568 O3.1, 'Janice' (?) to Ernie (Wentzel), 22.8.1956.

¹²⁵ *Nux* no. 5, 27.8.1956.

¹²⁶ BC 568 O3.1, 'Janice' (?) to Ernie (Wentzel), 22.8.1956.

sake of white reconciliation and presumably with the aid of the 'memorandum', corrected inaccuracies regarding the organisation's relationship with Afrikaans-speaking students. The meeting became a public relations exercise for NUSAS. The audience, largely ignorant of the national union, was bombarded with a litany of benefits accruing from NUSAS membership including that of overseas representation. Finally, a counter motion proposed by Jonathan Paton,¹²⁷ the future political philosopher and son of the LP's Alan Paton, that UNP expressed its full confidence in NUSAS, was carried *nem con* and the disaffiliation motion lost by one hundred and ten votes to forty one,¹²⁸ most of the forty one allegedly being Afrikaans-speaking.¹²⁹ During the following year *Nux* received many letters expressing their writers' dissatisfaction with the political nature of NUSAS and urging white student co-operation. Boonstra was to call for a federation of SRCs¹³⁰ along the lines envisaged by the reformers at Stellenbosch.

At Stellenbosch a puzzling meeting took place in May 1956. In what was probably a carefully laid plan to test the potential opposition to the ASB and the receptiveness of Stellenbosch to the re-establishment of a NUSAS branch on the campus, a meeting of 'NUSAS' was called, probably by students sympathetic to the national union.¹³¹ After discerning the anti-NUSAS sentiment of the audience, the organisers probably decided against speaking and turned the whole gathering into a joke,¹³² highlighting the benefits of cheap overseas tours and second-hand books accruing to members of the 'Nasionale Unie van Stellenbosse Arm Studente' (National Union of Poor Stellenbosch Students).¹³³

Contact with Afrikaans-speaking campuses remained important for NUSAS for a number of reasons. Firstly, NUSAS hoped to take advantage of the increasingly open conflicts and divisions manifesting themselves within Afrikaner nationalist organisations, including the ASB and individual student bodies, so as to enlist the support of the dissidents for university autonomy and the right of UCT and Wits to remain open. However, it could not permit these divisions to work against the national union by allowing the dissidents the advantage of forging a new apartheid-style student organisation outside the bounds of both the ASB and NUSAS. It could also not ignore a groundswell of support on its campuses for white co-operation which, following the implementation of university apartheid, could translate into the emergence of an apartheid-based national student body and consequently the demise of NUSAS.

¹²⁷ BC 586 O3.1, Winkie (Fletcher) to Ernie (Wentzel), 23.8.1956.

¹²⁸ 586 O3.1, A. Verbeeck, 'Report of the president to the General Meeting of August 1956', p. 3.

¹²⁹ BC 586 O3.1, Winkie (Fletcher) to Ernie (Wentzel), 23.8.1956.

¹³⁰ E. Boonstra to *Nux* no. 10, 1.10.1956.

¹³¹ A.L. Muller to *Die Matie*, 1.6.1956.

¹³² *Die Matie*, 1.6.1956.

¹³³ *ibid.*

Accordingly then, the 1957 NUSAS congress unanimously passed a resolution introduced in Afrikaans by C.I. Viljoen, an Afrikaans-speaking student at the Johannesburg College of Education (JCE) that Afrikaans-speakers return to NUSAS so that their voice could be heard in the national union.¹³⁴ A similar plea had been made to the 1957 ASB congress by a Wits SRC member in his personal capacity.¹³⁵ In liberal terms, Viljoen argued that as future leaders of South Africa, ASB and NUSAS members could not remain in 'spiritual isolation' from one another in a 'geographically integrated society' and that the ASB's refusal to meet other groups fostered 'prejudice' and was a disservice to its membership.¹³⁶ NUSAS congratulated the ASB for what it had done for Afrikaans-speaking students,¹³⁷ but reiterated its traditional policy that the ASB was a cultural organisation and not an alternative to NUSAS as claimed by the ASB.¹³⁸ It also threatened the ASB with legal action if it continued to label NUSAS 'communist'. So as to foster closer co-operation, NUSAS again urged its SRCs to make contact with their nearest Afrikaans-medium centre and attempt to undertake joint practical projects of mutual interest. Moreover, NUSAS executive visits would, for the first time, be extended to the Afrikaans-medium centres too.¹³⁹

What was the background to this accent on white co-operation which in the student and national press overshadowed the far more important decisions – the return of Fort Hare, the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and defiance of the 'church clause' - taken by the 1957 congress?

Divisions within the Nationalist alliance and, by extension the ASB, had a bearing on the greater emphasis NUSAS placed on white co-operation. The rejection by the government of the Tomlinson Commission led to a split within the NP and its think-tank, SABRA.¹⁴⁰ The 1956 ASB congress had already urged the government to implement the recommendations of the Tomlinson Commission¹⁴¹ before knowing of Verwoerd's repudiation of the report.¹⁴² In spite of the government's rejection, some within the ASB, particularly Van der Vyver and students at Stellenbosch, held on to the SABRA 'visionary' position, thus exacerbating in the ASB, as in wider society, the increasingly bitter divisions within Afrikaner nationalism. N.J. Olivier, a SABRA visionary at Stellenbosch,

¹³⁴ *Star*, 3.7.1957.

¹³⁵ BC 586 O6.1, na.(?) M. Kimberly, 'Mr Chairman, Members of Assembly', 'Annex 13', nd.

¹³⁶ *Cape Times*, 3.7.1957.

¹³⁷ *ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Cape Times*, 2.7.1957; *Star*, 2.7.1957.

¹³⁹ BC 586 O3.1, 'SRC report on 33rd NUSAS congress', nd. (1957), p. 2.

¹⁴⁰ D. O' Meara, *Forty lost years: the apartheid state and the politics of the National Party, 1948-1994*, Ohio University Press and Ravan, Athens and Randburg, 1996, pp. 70-71.

¹⁴¹ *Die Matie*, 20.4.1956.

¹⁴² D. O' Meara, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.

advised the Stellenbosch and UOFS ASB branches that a broad humanity should inform the manner in which good race relations were forged in South Africa. Further, he urged the ASB to make contact with black students so as to convince them of the advantages of separate universities, which Olivier believed the Afrikaans universities and students would actively have to help develop.¹⁴³

The ASB congress in April 1957 argued for the urgent necessity of 'separate development' in the interests of both the black population and the survival of white civilisation. Accordingly, it reiterated its call for separate black universities¹⁴⁴ with the proviso that facilities for black students at Wits and UCT were not taken away until equal ones were available at the separate institutions. The ASB claimed that some of the black people with whom they had made contact understood the value and necessity of university apartheid but did not support separate universities because the facilities would not be equal.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, the ASB remained committed to forging ties with other groups and races.¹⁴⁶ From the observation made by C.I. Prinsloo from Wits that a sizeable number of English-speakers there did not approve of the liberal policy prevailing on the campus, the ASB could conclude that possibilities for white English-speaking co-operation existed at Wits too. The ASB's ten year anniversary commemoration publication, *Gedenkblad* was to be brought out in both English and Afrikaans, presumably for consumption by disaffected English-speakers in the ranks of NUSAS. It was also to be distributed overseas¹⁴⁷ as the organisation still had ambitions of winning membership of the ISC and combating NUSAS's propaganda there. The ASB also decided to strengthen its good relationship with SABRA and investigate the dangerous attitude of superiority displayed by Afrikaners towards black people and the offensive behaviour towards black people in which this attitude manifested itself.¹⁴⁸

Moral Re-armament and national student co-operation

Treating people decently and honestly, the outward signs of a change of heart, were the foundations of the Moral Re-armament Movement (MRA) which was certainly responsible for furthering contact and co-operation between black and white, and English and Afrikaans-speaking whites in 1957. But not on the terms required by NUSAS.

The MRA was an evangelical Christian undertaking established in 1938 in London which focussed on 'personal transformation as the key to social transformation'. It adhered to

¹⁴³ *Die Matie*, 21.9.1956.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 3.5.1957.

¹⁴⁵ *Cape Times*, 17.4.1957 cited in *NUSAS Newsletter* no. 6, 25.4.1957.

¹⁴⁶ *Die Matie*, 3.5.1957.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

the 'belief in the power of personal apology as a way of breaking down barriers between people and opening dialogue'.¹⁴⁹ MRA has been credited with contributing to post-war Franco-German reconciliation as well as the settlement of nationalist-colonial conflict in Africa and Asia in the independence era. MRA was viewed with suspicion by the left¹⁵⁰ (and NUSAS¹⁵¹) as MRA preached Christianity as the answer to, and bulwark against, communism. It stressed negotiation in place of political and class conflict.¹⁵² The ANC was also opposed to MRA. After criticising the ANC at a conference held at the MRA's headquarters in Caux, Switzerland in 1953, William Nkomo (founder of the Wits ANCYL and SRC and NUSAS representative in the 1940s and later associated with the Black Consciousness Movement) was summarily expelled from the ANC by Nelson Mandela.¹⁵³

MRA was well received by all race groups in South Africa, including the student bodies of Fort Hare,¹⁵⁴ Stellenbosch and probably also the UOFS (see below). At a MRA meeting in the mixed Cape Town suburb of Woodstock, Loubser, former ASB president, announced that Stellenbosch students had undergone a change of heart. At the same time, Loubser and a contingent of Stellenbosch students apologised to the coloured audience 'for their attitude of superiority and indifference towards men of other races',¹⁵⁵ in some ways addressing the concerns of SABRA and the recent ASB congress of white attitudes of superiority.

Coombe reluctantly attended the MRA convention and converted. The prevailing atmosphere - which included Stellenbosch students singing 'Nkosi sikelele' and NP *Jeugbonders* apologising to black people for their past hatred towards them – became too overwhelming to resist. After asking Loubser for forgiveness for his attitude of bitterness towards the ASB, an organisation with which he still fundamentally disagreed, Coombe issued a widely publicised statement to this effect with Loubser,¹⁵⁶ much to the embarrassment of other NUSAS leaders.¹⁵⁷ Makiwane and Mutangbanengwe of the recently re-affiliated Fort Hare, feared that the MRA would sell out the liberation struggle

¹⁴⁹ 'Moral Re-armament, Rhodesia/Zimbabwe', Dylan Mathews, *War Prevention Works: 50 Stories of people resolving conflict*, http://www.afr.iofc.org/Oxford_Research_Group.pdf accessed 27.1.2011.

¹⁵⁰ 'Moral Re-armament', https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral_Re-Armament accessed 27.1.2011.

¹⁵¹ BC 586 A2.2, Ernie Wentzel to Trevor Coombe, 7.3.1957.

¹⁵² 'Moral Re-armament', https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral_Re-Armament accessed 27.1.2011; At a South African government-sponsored conference on wages, the MRA representatives rejected the idea of a statutory minimum wage. *New Age*, 15.12.1960.

¹⁵³ T. Karis and G. Carter (eds), *From protest to challenge: profiles of African politics in South Africa, 1882-1964, vol. 4*, Hoover, Stanford, 1977, pp. 119-120. A number of Africanists and anti-communists either within or having left the ANC joined MRA in the 1950s. Some of the younger ones like Philip Vundla and Fort Hare ANCYL member, Manasseh Tebotse would later be associated with the Black Consciousness Movement. T. Karis and G. Carter (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92, 116, 119-120, 156-157, 163.

¹⁵⁴ BC 586 A2.2, na. (?) Neville Rubin to Ernie (Wentzel), 7.5.1957.

¹⁵⁵ *New Age*, 2.5.1957.

¹⁵⁶ BC 586 A2.2, Trevor (Coombe) to Ernie (Wentzel), 3.5.1957.

¹⁵⁷ BC 586 A2.2, na. (?) Neville Rubin to Ernie (Wentzel), 7.5.1957.

and were concerned that NUSAS might also support the MRA and its reactionary agenda. Moreover, in the otherwise disturbingly well received MRA delegation to Fort Hare, Loubser had not been particularly popular.¹⁵⁸ MRA and the contact and co-operation that it fostered revealed clearly to NUSAS the dangers of contact and co-operation outside its own parameters. Namely, it risked the loss not only of conservative whites longing for white reconciliation but also its black and/or left wing. For the NP too, MRA represented a threat to orthodoxy. Following its 1953 investigation into the organisation, the *Broederbond* warned that the MRA fostered undesirable brotherhood, the disappearance of racial and national boundaries and the undermining of the true calling of the Afrikaner.¹⁵⁹ Singing 'Nkosi sikelele', a hymn adopted as the anthem of African liberation, could imply the acceptance of a separate African nationalism, but was more likely an endorsement of a common South African fatherland. A 'common fatherland' was a dangerous idea to the NP and was championed by the former chief justice, Henry Fagan (author of the UP's Fagan Commission on African urbanisation) in his Afrikaans poem, 'Nkosi sikelele' iAfrika'.¹⁶⁰ It was probably for these kinds of unorthodox 'subversive' views, as well as his MRA activities, that Loubser was expelled from the ASB.¹⁶¹ He would later publicly dissent from the NP.¹⁶²

Evidently MRA also found quite a following at the UOFS because in March 1958, its SRC stated that it had nothing to do with the MRA and forbade the propagation of the movement on the campus.¹⁶³ The NUSAS leadership could never formalise its opposition to MRA, but probably warned Coombe to keep his conversion out of the public eye.¹⁶⁴ No further references to Coombe and the MRA are to be found.

Reaching out to the ASB-affiliated student bodies

However, as the new NUSAS president, and believer in the efficacy of personal contact, Coombe embarked on a personal proselytisation of the ASB centres following the decision of the 1957 NUSAS congress that the executive visit non-NUSAS Afrikaans-

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ A. N. Pelzer, *Die Afrikaner-Broederbond eerste 50 jaar*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1980, p. 82; I. Wilkin and H. Strydom, *Super-Afrikaners: inside the Afrikaner Broederbond*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1980, pp. 144-145.

¹⁶⁰ J. Basson, *Steeds op die parlementere kolfblad, met insigte oor die Afrikaner en Afrikaans*, Politika, Cape Town, 2008, p. 19.

¹⁶¹ BC 586 A2.2, Ernie Wentzel to Trevor Coombe, 7.3.1957.

¹⁶² C. Heymans, 'Die politieke- en ideologiese strominge in en om die Afrikaanse Studentebond: 1948-1980', MA dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 1981, p. 110.

¹⁶³ *Irawa*, 25.3.1958; 1.5.1958.

¹⁶⁴ BC 586 A2.2, na.(?) Neville Rubin to Ernie (Wentzel), 7.5.1957.

medium centres. On arrival, uninvited at the UOFS, he was, to his surprise, met by local student leaders, including Koos Pretorius, an ASB executive member.¹⁶⁵ This called into question the ASB's professed policy of refusing to have any contact with NUSAS and its affiliated SRCs. Students at the UOFS had decided that they did want contact with some NUSAS-affiliated centres following a decision of the student body to disband the ASB¹⁶⁶ and a successful meeting with the Wits SRC in August 1957. However, the UOFS SRC was unwilling to put into effect the recommendation by Coombe that they invite Fort Hare and UNNE to their proposed informal inter-SRC conference because, as they explained lamely, their student body was not ready for such a thing and the black delegates might be subjected to inferior accommodation.¹⁶⁷ As far as student contact was concerned, Coombe used this opportunity to shoot down as 'a pipedream' and 'too late'¹⁶⁸ the ASB's plan for the creation of an apartheid-based federation of SRCs in the event of the implementation of university apartheid.¹⁶⁹ In typical liberal fashion, Coombe argued that Fort Hare's return to NUSAS signified that students wanted 'free contact' and 'not the 'straightjacketed contact envisaged by the ASB'. Moreover he warned, Fort Hare would not agree to participate in a separate black organisation and sit down at federal executive level with those who had 'inflict[ed]' apartheid on them.¹⁷⁰

During his three day visit the NUSAS president met all types of Afrikaner nationalists, from eugenicists and Boer republicans who believed implicitly in the infallibility of apartheid and the government,¹⁷¹ to those who were open to new ideas and, like SABRA visionaries, reflected that the only solution to the iniquities of apartheid was total equitable territorial separation and the white sacrifices this entailed.¹⁷² Accordingly for the latter group, their support for separate black universities was dependent on the provision of equal facilities. However, Coombe discovered that they had neither checked the Separate University Education Bill nor taken note of the findings, sent to them, of the recent Inter-SRC conference on university apartheid which quite clearly indicated that facilities would not be equal.¹⁷³ Coombe concluded that Nationalists were sincere but extraordinarily ignorant of the realities of apartheid and ignorant of their ignorance. This, coupled with

¹⁶⁵ BC 586 B4.1, 'Report on the Visit of the President to the Univ. of the Orange Free State, 14th-16th September 1957', p. 1.

¹⁶⁶ BC 586 A2.2, Magnus Gunther to Trevor Coombe, 1.9.1957.

¹⁶⁷ BC 586 B4.1, 'Report on the Visit of the President to the Univ. of the Orange Free State, 14th-16th September 1957', pp. 1-2.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁶⁹ 'Is NUSAS 'n nasionale unie van studente?', *Werda*, September 1956, p. 11.

¹⁷⁰ BC 586 B4.1, 'Report on the Visit of the President to the Univ. of the Orange Free State, 14th-16th September 1957', pp. 2-3.

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁷² *ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 5.

the power they wielded, made them dangerous and in desperate need of contact which NUSAS had to foster.¹⁷⁴

The ASB and the Seventh ISC in Ibadan

While Coombe was making contact at the UOFS, representatives of NUSAS and the ASB were attending the Pan African Student Seminar in Ghana and the Seventh ISC in Ibadan, Nigeria. The ASB still hoped to achieve one of the five categories of participation at the ISC, including the reinstated observer status.¹⁷⁵ It believed that NUSAS was a sectional political organisation¹⁷⁶ and thus did not qualify for delegate status.¹⁷⁷ With the return of Fort Hare, the national union had transformed itself into what the ASB described as 'a multi-racial conference' which could no longer ignore human rights violations and remain aloof from politics.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, by its defiance of the Native Laws Amendment Act NUSAS became, in the opinion of the ASB, overtly political.¹⁷⁹ However, NUSAS's claim to representativeness became more valid both in South Africa and abroad with the return of Fort Hare. Nonetheless, the ASB concluded that black students did not in reality support NUSAS but had been duped by NUSAS's 'underhand diplomacy' to believe that the academic freedom campaign would be strengthened if conducted by a 'multi-racial organisation'.¹⁸⁰ Evidently in some concern though, the ASB-affiliated press noted that COSEC had made much of the fact that South Africa would be represented for the first time at the ISC by a 'Negro',¹⁸¹ NUSAS executive member, Mutanganengwe.¹⁸²

At the Ibadan ISC, NUSAS was designated 'delegate' and the ASB 'visitor' 'after some debate about the credentials of both organisations'.¹⁸³ The ASB accused NUSAS of influencing this decision as Rubin had chaired the Credentials Committee. However, Rubin denied this, reminding the ASB that he had recused himself while South Africa was discussed and had seconded the motion that the ASB be given speaking rights.¹⁸⁴ The ISC was a success for NUSAS on two fronts. Firstly, NUSAS again received overwhelming support for the academic freedom campaign and, to the indignation of the ASB, members of the ISC committed themselves to writing letters of protest to the South

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁷⁵ *Die Matie*, 20.9.1957.

¹⁷⁶ 'ASB Hoofkantoor' to *Die Matie*, 9.8.1957; *Die Matie*, 20.9.1957.

¹⁷⁷ *Die Matie*, 20.9.1957.

¹⁷⁸ 'ASB Hoofkantoor' to *Die Matie*, 9.8.1957.

¹⁷⁹ BC 586 B4.1, 'Report on the Visit of the President to the Univ. of the Orange Free State, 14th-16th September 1957', p. 5.

¹⁸⁰ 'slinkse diplomatie'; *Die Matie*, 20.9.1957.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*

¹⁸² BC 586 B4.1, T. Coombe to the Executive, 14.9.1957, p. 4.

¹⁸³ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ N. Rubin to *Die Perdeby*, 19.9.1958.

African government.¹⁸⁵ Secondly, the ASB admitted defeat and concluded that it had few friends overseas and that to secure membership of the ISC would require opening its organisation to all students and jettisoning its political principles.¹⁸⁶ It did however agree to participate in a South African branch of the World University Service¹⁸⁷ to be organised initially by NUSAS. It also did not give up on contact in Africa. To the amazement of the ASB representative, Van der Vyver, his 'greatest friends'¹⁸⁸ at the ISC and the seminar were black students. His experiences in Ghana and Nigeria on the eve of their independence reinforced his belief in apartheid and the necessity of granting political rights to black South Africans in their own states. These measures, Van der Vyver believed, were the only means of preserving white civilisation from creeping communism and preventing an imminent Russian-backed South African liberation war. Communism, he reasoned, appealed materially rather than ideologically to Africans.¹⁸⁹ Accordingly then, the ASB investigated the possibility of a study tour to the rest of the continent and the distribution of a 'propaganda publication' in English, French and Spanish.¹⁹⁰

White co-operation and dissatisfaction with the ASB, 1957-8

Within South Africa, contact and co-operation continued. Rhodes invited the Afrikaans-medium student bodies to discussions regarding inter-university contact and co-operation. The Potchefstroom SRC accepted this invitation in principle.¹⁹¹ This conference did not take place until 1958, but NUSAS was concerned enough about it to send 'ammunition'¹⁹² to ensure that nothing endangering NUSAS came of it. A new National Union of Medical Students organised along racial lines, was mooted by the Pretoria Medical Students Council in 1957. Following an emotional visit to Pretoria,¹⁹³ the hitherto radical Wits Medical Students Council agreed to affiliate.¹⁹⁴ However, this 'betrayal of basic principles' was overturned following the toppling of the Medical Council by older medical students¹⁹⁵ with the active support of the NUSAS vice-president and Wits SRC president, Magnus Gunther.¹⁹⁶ Eventually, a non-racial Association of Medical Students of South Africa came into existence which excluded Pretoria students, mainly because their rector would not permit their participation, but surprisingly included those

¹⁸⁵ *Die Matie*, 20.9.1957.

¹⁸⁶ *Die Wapad*, 17.10.1957.

¹⁸⁷ BC 586 O6.1, Magnus Gunther to I.D. MacCrone, 7.12.1957.

¹⁸⁸ *Die Wapad*, 17.10.1957.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Die Wapad*, 13.6.1957.

¹⁹² BC 586 O1.2, General Secretary to Barbara Ferret, 2.8.1957.

¹⁹³ BC 586 O6.1, Magnus (Gunther) to Dave Clain, 11.11.1957; 31.12.1957.

¹⁹⁴ BC 586 O6.1, Magnus (Gunther) to Dave Clain, 31.12.1957.

¹⁹⁵ *Witwatersrand Student*, 7.3.1958.

¹⁹⁶ BC 586 O6.1, Magnus (Gunther) to Dave Clain, 11.11.1957; 31.12.1957.

from the newly established Stellenbosch Medical School.¹⁹⁷ Stellenbosch's involvement was probably grounded on short-term tactical considerations because, as some of its leaders would later admit, with the legislation of university apartheid, open institutions would become a thing of the past.

These positive developments were most probably responsible for a stream of criticism of the ASB as an obstacle to white co-operation.¹⁹⁸ In a widely publicised letter which evoked both furious and apologetic responses from the ASB,¹⁹⁹ and to which NUSAS, presumably for tactical reasons, requested its SRCs to respond,²⁰⁰ D. Potter of Stellenbosch harshly criticised the ASB. He accused it of being anti-English for refusing to meet NUSAS; supporting religious oppression because of its anti-Catholicism; being overtly political because of its support of the government; and provocatively, that nationalism was a dangerous ideology responsible for both world wars.²⁰¹

Support for Christian Nationalism and the ASB seemed to be waning on the university campuses, but not so at the training colleges.²⁰² For many university students, Christian Nationalism had become redundant because it had served its purpose of forging a united Afrikaner nation and achieving Afrikaner political and economic power. The southern universities initially refused to vote for an increase in membership fees to the cash-strapped ASB, presumably prolonging its financial dependence on the government and Afrikaner capitalist giants, Rembrandt,²⁰³ Sanlam and Volkskas.²⁰⁴ Stellenbosch students played no role in the 1958 Kruger Day celebrations²⁰⁵ and according to a SRC commission of inquiry, the ASB with its turgid ideological debates was as relevant to the average student as a 'riot in the Middle East'.²⁰⁶ In the north, the ASB branch at Potchefstroom bemoaned the fact that so few students had participated in the 'kerkhof skoffel' (hoeing of the cemetery)²⁰⁷ while at Pretoria, the ASB restructured itself so as to elicit more student interest.²⁰⁸ At the UOFS the student body disagreed with the political

¹⁹⁷ *Witwatersrand Student*, 7.3.1958.

¹⁹⁸ 'Oom Lokomotief' and 'Kiewiet Taarentaal' to *Irawa*, 25.3.1958.

¹⁹⁹ Basie Coetzee, Andre Groenewaldt, J.W.F. Pretorius and Johan van der Vyver to *Die Matie*, 23.8.1957; BC 586 O6.1, Wits SRC Minutes, 12.9.1957, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ BC 586 A2.1, Trevor Coombe to Neville Rubin, 3.9.1957.

²⁰¹ D. Potter to *Die Matie*, 9.8.1957.

²⁰² 'ASB – Tak staan plek vol', *Weerspieëlinge: 1909-1959: Gedenkblad van die Heidelbergse Onderwyskollege*, p. 97.

²⁰³ *Die Perdeby*, 21.5.1954.

²⁰⁴ BC 586 O5.1, D. Clain and N. Bromberger, 'Report of the UCT observers on 10th ASB Congress', 15.4.1958, p. 4.

²⁰⁵ *Die Matie*, 17.10.1958.

²⁰⁶ 'opstootjie in die Midde Ooste'; editorial, *Die Matie*, 8.8.1958.

²⁰⁷ D.C. Coetzee to *Die Wapad*, 26.7.1956. This event seemed to entail weeding and tidying up the churchyard or graveyard where those who had perished during the South African War were either buried or commemorated.

²⁰⁸ *Die Perdeby*, 28.2.1958.

nature of the ASB,²⁰⁹ probably accounting for the appalling attendance at ASB meetings there.²¹⁰ In 1957 a mass meeting voted to disband the ASB²¹¹ and replace it with a new national student body²¹² which would include the English-medium campuses.²¹³ This echoed the earlier and continued call by Stellenbosch students (including the majority of aspirant SRC candidates) for the abolition of *ipso facto* membership of the ASB and the transformation of the organisation into a purely cultural body for those identifying with Christian National principles.²¹⁴ It was this issue that was discussed at the 1958 ASB congress in Potchefstroom.

Attending the 1958 ASB congress

For the first time in its history, the ASB invited representatives of all the white NUSAS-affiliated SRCs, together with the NUSAS president in his personal capacity, to attend its annual congress. NUSAS and the SRCs deliberated their responses. They mistakenly believed that a breakthrough had been made as the ASB invitation had made no reference to the race of the representatives from Wits and Cape Town. However, it later transpired that the ASB was labouring under the false impression that Coombe during his visit to the UOFS had said that the 'open' universities would compromise and send only white observers if invited to the ASB meeting.²¹⁵ The president's report on his visit is vague on this matter but this so-called gentlemen's agreement became a bone of contention between the two sides.²¹⁶ In the event, both the Wits and UCT SRCs issued statements that they would send whomever they chose to future gatherings but purely incidentally, only white ones to the forthcoming ASB congress.²¹⁷ NUSAS and the SRCs regretted that UNNE and Fort Hare had not been invited and that the NUSAS president only in his personal capacity. Moreover, they all made it clear that their presence at the ASB congress did not mean recognition of the ASB as a national union but only as a sectional organisation.²¹⁸ Because the Wits team was composed of an ASB sympathiser in addition to the NUSAS vice-president, it had a strict mandate to reflect the views of the SRC only.²¹⁹

²⁰⁹ 'Oom Lokomotief' and 'Kiewiet Taarentaal' to *Irawa*, 25.3.1958.

²¹⁰ *Irawa*, June 1958.

²¹¹ BC 586 A2.2, Magnus Gunther to Trevor (Coombe), 1.9.1957.

²¹² *ibid.*; *Die Matie*, 24.8.1957.

²¹³ *Irawa*, June 1958.

²¹⁴ *Die Matie*, 24.8.1957; 20.9.1957; 7.3.1958.

²¹⁵ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1958, N. Bromberger, 'Univ. of Cape Town', Annexure 7, p. 82;

Witwatersrand Student vol. 10 no. 8, 10.6.1958.

²¹⁶ BC 586 O5.1, David Clain to Magnus (Gunther), 19.5.1958.

²¹⁷ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1958, 'University of the Witwatersrand', Annexure 12, p. 2; *Varsity* vol. 15 no. 4, 27.3.1958.

²¹⁸ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1958, 'University of the Witwatersrand', Annexure 12, p. 2; B4.1, Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 'ASB Congress 1958', 24.2.1958.

²¹⁹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1958, 'University of the Witwatersrand', Annexure 12, p. 2.

For the observers from UCT, Wits and Pietermaritzburg came the realisation that the ASB and NUSAS spoke two different languages 'literally' and 'figuratively'.²²⁰ The ASB's insistence that God was at the centre of all aspects of life was alien to students from UCT and Wits²²¹ where religious freedom and tolerance of all faiths was fiercely defended and any attempt to clothe the universities with a religious mantle was fiercely resisted (see chapter two).²²² Moreover, whereas the ASB was stuck in theoretical and ideological abstractions completely oblivious of practical realities, the open universities were the testing grounds of successful race relations and integration,²²³ the latter believed by the ASB to be divinely proscribed. The UCT delegates questioned whether the integration of Dutch, German and French settlers into the Afrikaner nation also went against God's wishes.²²⁴ These observations reinforced the long held view that co-operation with the ASB was impossible even though there was evidence of 'a new spirit or outlook' in the organisation.²²⁵ Only Durban and Rhodes²²⁶ were positive about future developments, believing that a new era had dawned. Moreover, Durban put forward the paternalistic UP view (long discredited by NUSAS) that the race problem could only be satisfactorily resolved once the two white groups had settled their differences.²²⁷

The observers witnessed at first hand the divisions within Afrikaner nationalism as manifested in the ASB including critiques of the inconsistency of the apartheid policy itself. Stellenbosch's attempt to transform the ASB – dismissed as a 'puppet-show parliament'²²⁸ - into either a voluntary Christian-National undertaking or an inter-university body furthering white co-operation was met, as before, with resistance from Pretoria (represented by *inter alia* Daan Verwoerd, the son of Hendrik Verwoerd)²²⁹ and absolute intransigence by the normal colleges, in particular Heidelberg.²³⁰ Heidelberg temporarily disaffiliated when the ASB recommitted itself to contact with the black population. Those in favour of contact argued that for apartheid to work, its proponents would have to get to know the Bantu in 'his very being' as 'a man and a person' and accept the Christian

²²⁰ Nux, May 1958.

²²¹ Varsity vol. 16 no. 9, 24.4.1958.

²²² In 1958 the UCT SRC opposed a measure by the new UCT principal that students fill out a card at registration stating their religious affiliation so as to make it easier for chaplains to identify their flock. Eventually it was agreed that this would be voluntary. BC 586 O5.1, David (Clain) to Neville (Rubin), 17.2.1958, p. 3. 'Thought for the day' in the student press came from a wide variety of sources including Kahil Gibran and Goethe. Varsity, 21.8.1958; 28.8.1958.

²²³ Varsity vol. 16 no. 9, 24.4.1958.

²²⁴ *ibid.*

²²⁵ Witwatersrand Student vol. 10 no. 7, 29.5.1958.

²²⁶ Rhodéo, 3.6.1958.

²²⁷ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1958, A. Tsipouras, 'UN.D Assembly Report', nd., p. 2.

²²⁸ In Afrikaans; 'popspel parlement'; Die Matie, 18.4.1958.

²²⁹ Die Perdeby, 25.4.1958; Witwatersrand Student vol. 10 no. 7, 29.5.1958.

²³⁰ 'ASB – Tak staan plek vol', Weerspieëling – 1909-1959: Gedenkblad van die Heidelbergse Onderwyskollege, p. 97.

Bantu as his equal.²³¹ The UCT SRC president questioned the rationality of the ASB's policy of 'civilising' and Christianising the African population while still upholding traditional African culture, as it was not clear whether this included the acceptance of brideprice and polygamy.

Through rigorous informal discussion, the NUSAS-affiliated delegates were able to 'seriously embarrass' some ASB delegates into acknowledging the error of their decisions. But some, like the future South African president, F.W. de Klerk²³² (who was also the son of Senator Jan de Klerk and nephew of J.G.Strijdom), whose most striking characteristic, according to the Afrikaans writer, André P. Brink, his contemporary at Potchefstroom, was his extreme obsequiousness to his political superiors,²³³ refused to question the *bona fides* of the government. ASB members like De Klerk would not accept, for example, that the authoritarian regulations to be imposed on the new black colleges were wrong, or in the case of an established university like Fort Hare, wholly unnecessary.²³⁴ Later De Klerk would state that he and others at that time countered the charge that Bantu Education and the 'controversial' takeover of African schools were aimed at providing an inferior education by pointing to the large number of universities and training colleges built by the government for Africans.²³⁵

The ASB delegates were divided on the issue of university apartheid. SABRA had already rejected key aspects of the Separate University Education Bill²³⁶ and a Stellenbosch academic had prophetically warned that violating university autonomy would set the precedent for a future government forcing Stellenbosch to admit black students. A 'progressive' from Stellenbosch argued that the open universities should remain open. He justified this by reference to the 'four freedoms of the university' which stated that the function of the university was to seek the truth and not serve any ideology which could come about through arbitrary changes of government.²³⁷ Notwithstanding, the congress, with the exception of the Stellenbosch delegates, thanked the government for its progress made towards the implementation of university apartheid. The Wits and UCT observers warned those present that this vote of thanks could potentially jeopardise future inter-university student relations and was moreover, inconsistent with the ASB's 1957

²³¹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 10 no. 7, 29.5.1958.

²³² *Varsity* vol. 16 no. 9, 24.4.1958.

²³³ A.P. Brink, *Fork in the road, a memoir*, Vintage, London, 2010, pp. 127-128.

²³⁴ *Varsity*, 24.4.1958.

²³⁵ F.W. de Klerk, *The last trek a new beginning: the autobiography*, Pan, London, 2000, p. 28.

²³⁶ *Star*, 9.1.1958; *Die Burger*, 11.1.1958.

²³⁷ *Die Matie*, 18.4.1958.

resolution that the open universities ought not be closed until equal facilities were available at the new black colleges.²³⁸

National student co-operation and a possible split within the ASB

Despite criticism of ASB policy by the NUSAS affiliates and a decision by the ASB executive at its meeting in Heidelberg in June 1958 to revisit its controversial decision to seek contact with white English-speaking and black students,²³⁹ contact and co-operation continued throughout 1958. The Potchefstroom ASB branch under the chairmanship of F.W. de Klerk hosted a meeting with ex-Chief Albert Luthuli, president of the ANC. For the students present it was 'a strange experience' to 'converse' with a black person on the basis of equality while Luthuli's espousal of a universal franchise in a unitary South Africa was utterly 'alien' and could not be squared with the survival of the Afrikaner nation.²⁴⁰

Stellenbosch believed that with the expansion of facilities at the northern universities, it would become a more exclusively southern institution and accordingly more politically moderate too and so would be in a position to champion student unity in the south, furthering the already good relations existing between Stellenbosch and UCT. Furthermore, student leaders argued that a good Afrikaner was first a good South African.²⁴¹ Accordingly, the SRC appointed a commission of inquiry into the aims, requirements and structure of a national student organisation. However, the commission's recommendations that students come together on an apartheid basis as South Africans, thus avoiding all vital controversial issues, was rejected by both the UCT and Durban SRCs.²⁴² However, a significant minority of students at UCT felt that their views regarding white student co-operation were being ignored by the NUSAS-dominated SRC. This view was reinforced by the surprise by-election defeat of a NUSAS-aligned candidate by a conservative anti-NUSAS student seeking white co-operation.²⁴³ A conservative group, allegedly linked to the UP, instigated a reform of the UCT electoral system aimed at breaking the power of NUSAS in student government.²⁴⁴

Despite reservations about its commitment to white student co-operation, the UCT SRC invited its Stellenbosch counterpart to meet representatives of the UNNE SRC visiting UCT. Though the UNNE visitors denounced apartheid unconditionally during a student

²³⁸ *Varsity* vol. 16 no. 12, 16.5.1958.

²³⁹ 'ASB – Tak staan plek vol', *op. cit.*, p. 97.

²⁴⁰ F.W. de Klerk, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

²⁴¹ *Die Matie*, 16.5.1958.

²⁴² BC 586 O5.1, D. Clain, 'UCT SRC: Report to the NUSAS Congress, 26.6.1959'.

²⁴³ BC 586 O5.1, N. Rubin to D. Clain, 15.4.1958; *Varsity* vol. 15 no. 4, 27.3.1958.

²⁴⁴ *Varsity* vol. 16 no. 23, 28.8.1958; Ian Brown to *Varsity* vol. 16 no. 24, 4.9.1958.

mass meeting²⁴⁵ (see chapter five), it was the strong terms and no-holds-barred language employed by the black, NEUM-aligned UCT students to express their utter contempt for the 'herrenvolk' and any collaboration with it that evidently shocked the Stellenbosch SRC to the core. Stellenbosch thus concluded that integrated universities bred racial bitterness, hatred and intolerance as demonstrated by the bearing of black UCT students, whereas racially segregated institutions such as the 'Bantu University of Natal' [sic] bred a less hostile attitude – not the conclusion to which the UCT SRC and NUSAS wished Stellenbosch to arrive.

Students from UNNE made up the bulk of the audience of those attending the Natal University Conference,²⁴⁶ addressed quite willingly by Van der Vyver²⁴⁷ in May 1958.²⁴⁸ Similarly positive signs of an ASB thaw were not visible on the Witwatersrand. So as to make inroads into the English-medium campuses among students disaffected with NUSAS, the ASB had amended its rule to make provision for individual membership. Accordingly, Hendrick Smit, one of the Wits observers at the ASB congress, joined up.²⁴⁹ Smit and Neville Cook applied to the SRC for permission to establish an ASB branch at Wits. This was acceded to with the proviso that it was open to all and that membership would not require resignation from NUSAS.²⁵⁰ The ASB supporters resigned from the SRC in protest, went to the Afrikaans press and charged the SRC with restricting campus freedom.²⁵¹ A petition requesting the principal to overturn the SRC's decision was circulated and signed by the one hundred and fifty students²⁵² who had already resigned from NUSAS.²⁵³

The matter - whether a closed ASB branch should be allowed to operate at Wits - went to a referendum. This was a risky course to follow at this particular time. The SRC could either have stalled its decision until the issue of university apartheid was settled, thereby avoiding hostile Nationalist publicity, or allowed the branch to function until someone was excluded from it.²⁵⁴ There was a fear that this was a ploy by the government to impose university apartheid via the backdoor by alleging that the rights of Afrikaans-speaking students were being suppressed at Wits²⁵⁵ (a similar tactic to that employed at Rhodes

²⁴⁵ BC 586 O5.1, 'Appendix: Address by Mr Makoena [sic] and Mr Samuels, 12th May, 1958'.

²⁴⁶ *Nux*, August 1958.

²⁴⁷ BC 586 O4.1, Bill (Ainslie) to Trevor (Coombe), 3.6.1958.

²⁴⁸ *Die Perdeby*, 6.6.1958; *Nux*, August 1958.

²⁴⁹ *Die Perdeby*, 25.4.1958.

²⁵⁰ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1958, Annexure 12, 'University of the Witwatersrand', p. 93; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 10 no. 8, 10.6.1958.

²⁵¹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 10 no. 8, 10.6.1958.

²⁵² BC 586 A2.2, Magnus (Gunther) to Ros (Traub), Trevor (Coombe) and Neville (Rubin), 13.6.1958.

²⁵³ *Die Wapad*, 7.8.1958.

²⁵⁴ R. Heard and K. Kirsch, editorial, *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 10 no. 9, 17.6.1958.

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*; *Rand Daily Mail* quoted in *Die Wapad*, 7.8.1958.

shortly before this to thwart the Eastern Cape university's expansion into Port Elizabeth - discussed in chapter three). Moreover, the Wits student press feared that 'the engineers' with their traditional antipathy to supposedly 'commie agitators' would be easy targets for ASB propaganda and would vote in favour of a closed ASB branch.²⁵⁶

In the massive propaganda war which preceded the referendum, the ASB and the NP press accused the NUSAS-aligned SRCs of hypocrisy, inconsistency and dishonesty regarding liberal rights and academic freedom. The ASB questioned the Wits SRC's commitment to freedom and democracy as these appeared to apply only to black students and not to Afrikaners.²⁵⁷ On the other hand, Wits students challenged the ASB on its interpretation of democracy. Hendrick Smit was forced to concede that at Pretoria and other ASB centres, 'Jews and Catholics [were] not tolerated because they [were] a danger to the traditions of CNE' and that the NP, the ASB's parent body, had sympathised with Nazism and 'was hostile to the Allied cause during the war'.²⁵⁸ In the event, Wits voted by a large majority against a closed ASB branch on the campus,²⁵⁹ the ASB accusing NUSAS of instigating its problems at Wits, a charge which NUSAS rejected.²⁶⁰

Despite this setback - or perhaps victory - for the ASB, Stellenbosch and the UOFS, both centres dissatisfied with the ASB, sent observers to the 1958 NUSAS congress, the first time since the entry of Fort Hare in 1945. Though the congress was primarily concerned with university apartheid and the findings of the Select Commission, it did devote substantial time to furthering national student co-operation.²⁶¹ For the SRCs of Rhodes and Durban however, the outstanding features of the gathering were the presence of the Afrikaans universities, the cordial atmosphere that prevailed²⁶² and the (over-optimistic²⁶³) possibility of student co-operation and even unity. NUSAS had reiterated its policy of bilingualism²⁶⁴ while the Stellenbosch observers had singled out Rhodes and Natal for

²⁵⁶ R. Heard and K. Kirsch, *op. cit.*

²⁵⁷ *Die Perdeby*, 20.6.1958.

²⁵⁸ R. Heard and K. Kirsch, *op. cit.*

²⁵⁹ The figures were 2044 – 478. BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1958, Annexure 12, 'University of the Witwatersrand', p. 93.

²⁶⁰ BC 586 B1, 'Correlated Resolutions of NUSAS policy as at 1960', 42/59, p. 12.

²⁶¹ *Dome*, August 1958.

²⁶² *ibid.*; BC 586 O3.1, 'Minutes of an SRC Meeting held in the Staff Common Room, Howard College on Thursday, 31st July 1958 at 8. pm'.

²⁶³ *Nux*, August 1958.

²⁶⁴ *Cape Times*, 3.7.1958.

their goodwill and conciliatory attitude²⁶⁵ and momentarily called on the Afrikaans-medium universities to return to NUSAS.²⁶⁶

Shortly after the conclusion of the NUSAS congress, members of the Stellenbosch and UOFS SRCs descended on Rhodes again for the long awaited inter-SRC conference.²⁶⁷ NUSAS was not invited and was kept in the dark both before and after the event.²⁶⁸ The participants trotted out the old UP mantra that before the race question could be tackled, the two white groups had to settle their differences. They believed that student co-operation was essential, that NUSAS and the ASB were the basis for negotiation, and that the first step towards co-operation would be a conference of white SRCs.²⁶⁹

The Stellenbosch and UOFS observers had spent much of the NUSAS congress with black delegates²⁷⁰ and thus agreed with alacrity to the suggestion of Rhodes and Fort Hare that, as future leaders, they should visit Fort Hare and Lovedale to hear the black view of apartheid.²⁷¹ For the Stellenbosch students, this was the most 'educative' aspect of the conference,²⁷² but evidently also the most disturbing, jolting them into the harsh realities of South Africa. At the insistence of Makiwane, the guests hesitantly addressed an informal gathering of Fort Hare students on Christian National Education but refused to relate the policy to apartheid and oppression. Government policy was justified by alleging that Afrikaners were 'upright' and 'honest' whereas the English were 'deceptive'. The visitors subsequently rushed back to Grahamstown, neither staying overnight as planned, nor returning to address the mass meeting scheduled for the following day.²⁷³

The Stellenbosch delegates learnt from this visit that Fort Hare students were politically conscious, had undeniable intellectual ability,²⁷⁴ rejected tribalism and were the future leaders of the black population. Most importantly, they discovered that little time remained for the proselytisation of apartheid among the black population.²⁷⁵ However, the new prime-minister, Hendrik Verwoerd, himself at loggerheads with SABRA visionaries regarding their proposed conference with black leaders,²⁷⁶ disapproved of the

²⁶⁵ BC 586 O3.1, 'Minutes of an SRC Meeting held in the Staff Common Room, Howard College on Thursday, 31st July 1958 at 8.pm'; *Dome*, August 1958.

²⁶⁶ *Irawa*, September 1958.

²⁶⁷ *ibid.*, October 1958.

²⁶⁸ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1958.

²⁶⁹ *Die Matie*, 15.9.1958.

²⁷⁰ *ibid.*; *Irawa*, September 1958.

²⁷¹ *Die Matie*, 15.9.1958.

²⁷² *ibid.*

²⁷³ BC 586 M1, R.M. Maja to Neville Rubin, 23.9.1958.

²⁷⁴ *Die Matie*, 15.9.1958. Writing about his experiences at Fort Hare in the early 1960s, Jonty Driver, the 1963-4 NUSAS president observed that 'Fort Hare students were almost without exception brilliant debaters'. C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS presidency (1963-4)', Unpublished memoir, p. 4.

²⁷⁵ *Die Matie*, 15.9.1958.

²⁷⁶ J. Lazar, 'Verwoerd versus the 'visionaries'', *op. cit.*, p. 380.

independent course being pursued by Afrikaans student leaders. On his return from Grahamstown, Beyers Roelofse, three times president of the Stellenbosch SRC and later an army chaplain,²⁷⁷ was summoned to the prime minister's office and made to promise never to meet black students again without the prior arrangement of the Department of Bantu Administration.²⁷⁸ Similar signs of a clampdown on dissent within Afrikanerdom were evident when ASB president, Van der Vyver was banned from speaking to a racially mixed audience at Wits shortly after co-executive member and prime minister's son, Daan Verwoerd, had attended a meeting addressed by Albert Luthuli.²⁷⁹

Little sign of NP dissent is evident in Beyers Roelofse's impressions of the recent NUSAS congress penned for the Stellenbosch and UCT student newspapers shortly before the Rhodes Conference. Roelofse alleged that congress delegates held disparate views on religion and politics but once inside the student assembly acted as a united front. Moreover, the national union was anti-Afrikaans and un-South African as demonstrated by the damaging actions of the powerful vice-president of international relations, Rubin on his eight month overseas trip. Further, although NUSAS claimed to have no policy on biological integration, the organisation was dominated by Jews seeking to destroy their ancient Jewish identity in the pursuit of biological integration.²⁸⁰

This opened a hornet's nest and aroused suspicions that Roelofse's observations were anti-Semitic. Through the Pietermaritzburg SRC, NUSAS denied that it was dominated by Jews.²⁸¹ NUSAS leaders, whether Jewish or not, represented all NUSAS members and not Jews, explained the SRC.²⁸² Moreover, NUSAS as a non-political organisation had no policy regarding biological integration.²⁸³ Bernard Meidnitz of the South African Federation of Jewish and Zionist Students claimed that his organisation rejected biological integration, assimilation and intermarriage between Jew and Gentile because of the loss of identity and tradition involved. Vindicating Roelofse, Meidnitz claimed that Jews in NUSAS were 'wholly out of step with the rest of the Jewish student community'.²⁸⁴ Roelofse then urged Meidnitz to root out the 'misguided' anti-Afrikaans Jewish elements within the national union.²⁸⁵ Christoph Marx argues that during the 1930s, Afrikaner nationalists held that Jews, like communists, championed and practised miscegenation. Moreover, as pointed out in chapter three, anti-semitism and anti-

²⁷⁷ *Die Burger*, 30.1.1993, <http://152.111.1.87/argief/berigte/dieburger/1993/01/5/1.html> accessed 16.11.2010.

²⁷⁸ *Cape Times*, 21.4.1959.

²⁷⁹ *Nux* no. 7, September 1958.

²⁸⁰ *Varsity* vol. 16 no. 20, 7.8.1958.

²⁸¹ M. Meiring, W.S. Ainslie and J. Chettle to *Die Matie*, 17.10.1958.

²⁸² BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1958, pp. 7-8.

²⁸³ M. Meiring, W.S. Ainslie and J. Chettle to *Die Matie*, 17.10.1958.

²⁸⁴ *Varsity* vol. 16 no. 26, 18.9.1958.

²⁸⁵ Beyers Roelofse to *Varsity* vol. 16 no. 29, 3.10.1958.

communism were interchangeable. The 'unassimilable', 'cosmopolitan' 'Jew', undoubtedly communist, was considered the greatest threat to Afrikaner nationalism and the Afrikaner nation.²⁸⁶ During this biological integration debate, NUSAS was accused by the ASB of being communist as it opposed the Suppression of Communism Act, only opposed communism when it infringed upon student rights, and did not bar communists from participation in its structures.

At the 1958 NUSAS executive meeting, attended for the first time since the 1930s by observers from Stellenbosch and the UOFS, Roelofse, now Stellenbosch SRC president, refused to co-author with Meidnitz a retraction for the student press of the misleading statements that he and Meidnitz had made regarding Jews, NUSAS and biological integration.²⁸⁷

Negotiating Stellenbosch's return to NUSAS, 1958-9

Surprisingly, in the light of his attacks on NUSAS, the new NUSAS president, Rubin welcomed the election of Roelofse to the Stellenbosch SRC presidency and believed that this augured well for NUSAS-Afrikaans student relations. In his election manifesto, Roelofse called for Stellenbosch to re-affiliate to NUSAS and ditch its membership of the ASB.²⁸⁸ He argued that NUSAS members would never leave their national union²⁸⁹ and that as the majority of students in South Africa were Afrikaans-speaking, they would be able to take control of NUSAS. From his observations at the 1958 NUSAS congress, Roelofse concluded that NUSAS was a powerful functioning 'propaganda machine'²⁹⁰ with a formidable status overseas and was thus capable of doing immense harm to South Africa. Moreover, in common with other Stellenbosch students, Roelofse believed that the NUSAS constitution was fundamentally sound and could thus form the basis of a new student organisation, and importantly, was the reason why NUSAS had overseas representation and the ASB did not.²⁹¹ He contended that Afrikaans-speaking students could not sit back and play second fiddle to NUSAS and wait until more propitious circumstances prevailed, but should take the initiative and seize the opportunity immediately.²⁹² Moreover, as Stellenbosch student leaders pointed out, university apartheid legislation would change the entire university landscape and make matters such as mixed representation redundant, thereby seriously weakening the liberal position.

²⁸⁶ C. Marx, *Oxwagon sentinel: radical Afrikaner nationalism and the history of the Ossewabrandwag*, UNISA Press, Pretoria, nd., (originally published in German in 1998), pp. 239, 257-258.

²⁸⁷ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1958.

²⁸⁸ *Die Matie*, 25.3.1959.

²⁸⁹ *Die Wapad*, 28.5.1959.

²⁹⁰ *Die Matie*, 8.8.1958.

²⁹¹ *ibid.*

²⁹² *ibid.*

In other words, Roelofse envisaged an NP takeover of NUSAS. However, probably because of his dressing down by Verwoerd, Roelofse initially played no role in the negotiations with NUSAS. This was left to the more genuinely enlightened Nationalists like expelled ASB president and MRA activist, Loubser.

Discussions in Johannesburg between the Stellenbosch SRC and NUSAS were of a complicated, technical nature and revolved around the NUSAS constitution. Stellenbosch could not accept article 2.4, which spelt out NUSAS's understanding of university autonomy and academic freedom *viz* the right of all to meet and study together. Stellenbosch wanted this rephrased to NUSAS upholding university autonomy so that Stellenbosch had the right not to study together. Its delegates were prepared to accept the compromise of Richard Goldstone (later a judge and international conflict resolution arbitrator) that article 2.4 be moved to the 'schedule of entrenched clauses' from which Stellenbosch could dissociate.²⁹³ Later Loubser was to suggest that article 2.4 was amended to 'to uphold the principles of the autonomy of the universities and the academic freedom of students'.²⁹⁴ Rubin argued that article 2.4 was important to black students and that only the student assembly could scrap the clause. It was decided to invite Stellenbosch to affiliate to NUSAS and at the 1959 congress Stellenbosch could officially motivate its constitutional reservations and the steps to be taken to remove these.²⁹⁵ However, in March 1959, Roelofse and Ben Pieters informed NUSAS that Stellenbosch could not re-affiliate if NUSAS did not differentiate and discriminate against students on racial grounds.²⁹⁶ At the same time, presumably adhering to Verwoerd's instructions of 1958,²⁹⁷ the Stellenbosch SRC revoked its invitation to its UCT counterpart for a joint meeting because of the presence of a coloured student on the UCT SRC, which earlier had not posed a problem.²⁹⁸ The Stellenbosch debating club followed suit,

²⁹³ BC 586 B4.1, 'Verslag van samesprekings met mnr. Shingler (Wits), Goldstone (Wits) en Rubin (NUSAS-president) deur mnre. Pieters en Loubser i.s. art. 24 van die NUSAS-grondwet'; 'n Protocol van informelle byeenkoms tuseen mnr. John Shingler (Wits), Richard Goldstone (Wits), B. Pieters (U.S.), A.J. Visser (prokureursklerk te Johannesburg) en Jan Loubser (oud-ASB-President) in Johannesburg op 28 Januarie 1959', p. 2.

²⁹⁴ BC 586 B4.1, 'Verslag van samesprekings met mnr. Shingler (Wits), Goldstone (Wits) en Rubin (NUSAS-president) deur mnre. Pieters en Loubser i.s. art. 24 van die NUSAS-grondwet'; 'n Protocol van informelle byeenkoms tuseen mnr. John Shingler (Wits), Richard Goldstone (Wits), B. Pieters (U.S.), A.J. Visser (prokureursklerk te Johannesburg) en Jan Loubser (oud-ASB-President) in Johannesburg op 28 Januarie 1959', p. 4.

²⁹⁵ BC 586 B4.1, 'n Samevatting van die belangrikste punte van bespreking tussen mnre Neville Rubin (president van NUSAS), John Shingler (Voorsitter, Wits SVR), Richard Goldstone (Ondervoorsitter, Wits SVR) en Jan Loubser. Johannesburg 5 Februarie 1959', pp. 4-5.

²⁹⁶ BC 586 B4.1, N. Rubin to the Executive, 15.4.1959; *Die Matie*, 25.3.1959; *Die Wapad*, 1.5.1959; *Varsity* vol. 18 no 7, 2.4.1959.

²⁹⁷ *Cape Times*, 21.4.1959.

²⁹⁸ *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 9, 16.4.1959.

although the appointment of Hector Qunta as UCT's main speaker had posed no problem in 1958, even resulting in him being invited to address a Stellenbosch student society.²⁹⁹

Nonetheless, Stellenbosch remained committed to white co-operation. The student body upheld the SRC's resolution that Stellenbosch would resign from the ASB if the forthcoming ASB congress rejected its plans for the restructuring of the organisation and the creation of a new inter-university body which would bring together all South African students unable to reconcile with NUSAS.³⁰⁰ All NUSAS-affiliated SRCs were invited to observe the ASB congress, including the NUSAS president. UCT and Wits did not attend because of the stipulation of apartheid representation, but Rhodes and Durban did.³⁰¹ Possibly on the instructions of NUSAS, the Wits SRC president, John Shingler, recommended to Durban that it not accept the ASB's invitation as he believed that the Durban observers were too inexperienced to attend such a gathering and could do immense harm to NUSAS.³⁰²

Shingler's fears were borne out. Probably because of the criticism of NUSAS by Rhodes and Durban and the developments at Rhodes towards the establishment of a new national student organisation³⁰³ (discussed later), which also had a bearing on Stellenbosch's plans, the ASB congress very reluctantly agreed to Stellenbosch spearheading the establishment of a new non-ideological national federation of South African students outside the ASB.³⁰⁴ Overall, the ASB was a divided crisis filled organisation (the dissidents being labelled '*sappe*') and though its adherents claimed that the 1959 congress had breached the conflict between the north and south,³⁰⁵ it was quite clear that the era of the SABRA visionaries and a more enlightened approach was over and that the ASB had returned to NP orthodoxy. Johan Strauss, founder member of the newly formed *Ruiterwag*, the youth wing of the *Broederbond* was elected to the ASB presidency.³⁰⁶ This boded ill for NUSAS-ASB relations because apart from the declaration of war against NUSAS and its anti-apartheid activities overseas,³⁰⁷ the *Ruiterwag* was

²⁹⁹ *ibid.* vol. 16 no. 12, 16.5.1958; no. 14, 29.5.1958.

³⁰⁰ *Die Matie*, 25.3.1959.

³⁰¹ BC 586 O3.1, J.A. Moore, 'Report of the UN.D Delegation Leader', nd.

³⁰² BC 586 O3.1, 'Chip' (Anthony Tsipouras) to John (Shingler), 6.2.1959.

³⁰³ *Die Wapad*, 20.3.1959; *Die Matie*, 17.4.1959. The Durban representative rhetorically asked the ASB congress 'how could we in Durban be held responsible for what Neville Rubin is doing in Cape Town?' while the Rhodes representative declared that Rhodes did not agree with NUSAS's policies or behaviour. *Die Matie*, 17.4.1959.

³⁰⁴ *Die Wapad*, 28.5.1959; *Die Matie*, 17.4.1959.

³⁰⁵ B. Pieters, 'Afrikaanse Studentebond oorleef krisis in eie geledere: noord en suid versoen', *Die Matie*, 17.4.1959.

³⁰⁶ *Die Wapad*, 20.3.1959; *Rand Daily Mail*, 1.7.1959.

³⁰⁷ *Die Wapad*, 19.6.1959.

committed to ensuring that organisations such as NUSAS would have no place on the Afrikaans campuses.³⁰⁸

What was the political background to these developments? African resistance to apartheid continued and with the formation of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in April 1959, became injected with a more radical dose of African nationalism. In early 1959, the ANC called for a boycott of Afrikaans manufactured products, evoking angry defensive reactions from whites countrywide. University students were no exception. At UCT NUSAS was accused of furthering the campaign, wrongly, although individual student leaders allied to NUSAS were sympathetic.³⁰⁹ The Extension of University Education Bill came before parliament in January 1959. It was opposed by the UP, NUSAS and its affiliated SRCs and, to the embarrassment of the government, received unprecedented condemnation and coverage overseas (discussed in chapter five).

After the death of Strijdom, a leadership struggle within the NP ensued which was won by Verwoerd with the help of the *Broederbond*. The cracks within Afrikaner nationalism remained evident and it appeared as if Verwoerd and the *Broederbond* were attempting to impose NP orthodoxy on Nationalist institutions. In the wake of the decolonisation of Africa and the necessity of building a united white South Africa for the preservation of white Western civilisation, Verwoerd devoted his entire Union day speech to white co-operation³¹⁰ and introduced his Promotion of Bantu Self Government Bill which laid the foundation for separate ethnic states and removed indirect African representation in parliament. Japie Basson was expelled from the NP caucus for his criticism of the Bill³¹¹ while SABRA was to find the Bill seriously wanting. SABRA had already shattered in late 1958 when Verwoerd resigned from the body after clashes with the visionaries over the application of various aspects of apartheid, including contact and co-operation with the black population and university apartheid.³¹² When Afrikaner academics at Potchefstroom openly aired their reservations about government policy in the English press, they were swiftly silenced and brought back to NP orthodoxy by their University Council and, in the case of L.J. du Plessis, expelled from the NP.

As elsewhere, a significant minority of Potchefstroom students opposed Verwoerdian policy and pressed for a moderate centrist party between the UP and NP. This eventually

³⁰⁸ N. Smith, *Die Afrikaner Broederbond: belewinge van die binnekant*, Lapa Uitgewers, Pretoria, 2009, p. 169.

³⁰⁹ *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 10, 23.4.1959; no. 11, 8.5.1959.

³¹⁰ J. Lazar, 'Conformity and conflict: Afrikaner Nationalist politics in South Africa 1948-1961', *op. cit.*, p. 328.

³¹¹ T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa, a modern history (fourth edition)*, MacMillan, Houndsmill and London, 1991, p. 353.

³¹² J. Lazar, 'Conformity and conflict', *op. cit.*, p. 203.

materialised in the incarnation of the South African Bond in July 1959,³¹³ but until then some Potchefstroom students joined the local branch of the UP,³¹⁴ while a few even contemplated joining NUSAS.³¹⁵ Youth branches of the UP and LP were established at the University of Pretoria, but although Ben Piek, the chairperson of the NP *Jeugbond* said their adherents would suffer no physical violence, they would not be tolerated as the NP was the only political party allowed at the university.³¹⁶ As mentioned earlier, the ASB passed out of the hands of the enlightened SABRA visionaries (Loubser and Van der Vyver) to NP Verwoerdian orthodoxy with the election of *Ruiter*, Strauss, to the presidency.³¹⁷

White co-operation and the Verwoerdian counter-revolution at Stellenbosch

In April 1959, the Extension of University Education Bill passed its Second Reading, accompanied by nonstop vigils in Cape Town and other parts of the country organised by NUSAS and its affiliated SRCs. Coinciding with these protests was a debate on university apartheid between Stellenbosch and UCT.³¹⁸ Vernon February, a coloured student at UCT, brilliantly demolished university apartheid, while his Stellenbosch opponents, in the opinion of Rubin, evaded the issue and discussed culture and nationalism. Provocatively then, Rubin produced correspondence between himself and Pieters, ASB vice-president for international relations (later constitutional law expert and counsel in the registration of the *Herstigte Nasionale Party*)³¹⁹ in which Pieters justified apartheid in terms reminiscent of *Mein Kampf*. The debate ended in uproar. Rubin instructed the NUSAS SRCs to publish the correspondence as well as a letter from Pieters to university principals abroad accusing NUSAS of committing high treason in calling for protests against the government's Extension of University Education Bill. NUSAS subsequently threatened to sue Pieters for defamation and challenged him to publicise the replies he had received from the university principals.³²⁰ He would not, but NUSAS did through the campus newspapers of its affiliated SRCs.³²¹

In the meantime, a crisis already simmering at Stellenbosch boiled over the day after the inter-university debate. Firstly, much to the consternation of orthodox Nationalists, the press was awash with Stellenbosch's unorthodoxy and 'liberalism' (which included a

³¹³ *Cape Times*, 10.7.1959.

³¹⁴ *Rand Daily Mail*, 2.7.1959.

³¹⁵ BC 586 A2.1, Neville (Rubin) to Magnus (Gunther), 25.5.1959.

³¹⁶ *Dome*, May 1959.

³¹⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, 1.7.1959.

³¹⁸ *Cape Times*, 18.4.1959.

³¹⁹ <http://www.lawandaudit.net/advocates/pietersb.htm> accessed 16.11.2010.

³²⁰ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1959, p. 18.

³²¹ *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 17, 18.6.1959; *Rhodeo* vol. 13 no. 6, 8.10.1959; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 11, 26.6.1959.

report about a SABRA-facilitated meeting between the ANC and senior students and members of staff),³²² its possible return to NUSAS and its rejection of the ASB. Secondly, the campus divided over the disruption of a speech delivered by Anglican archbishop, Joost de Blank, on race relations in March 1959³²³ and the conviction in the Stellenbosch magistrate's court of two members of the SRC for assaulting a black university employee.³²⁴ Finally, seventy three students voted against university apartheid at a five hundred-strong mass meeting called after four members of the SRC failed to support such a motion at a recent SRC meeting.³²⁵ The four were subsequently asked by P.H. Kapp, later professor of History at Stellenbosch, to explain their actions to a mass meeting and resign from the SRC if these were found unacceptable to the student body.³²⁶

The crisis escalated. Three students were assaulted for expressing their reservations about university apartheid,³²⁷ while seven members of the SRC resigned, including one of the original dissentients and those with criminal records, forcing the calling of a by-election.³²⁸ Although denying it,³²⁹ Roelofse went to see Verwoerd and the MP for Stellenbosch for advice.³³⁰ This resulted in the dissolution of the SRC, the removal of the dissidents and the calling of fresh elections fought around the issue of university apartheid.³³¹ In addition, the entire editorial board of *Die Matie*, the Stellenbosch student newspaper, resigned³³² after their editor, the foremost proponent of white student co-operation³³³ was suspended by the SRC for questioning Roelofse's assertion that Stellenbosch was a sectional Afrikaner nationalist institution and not a white South African one.³³⁴ Consequently, there was neither coverage of the SRC election and university apartheid,³³⁵ nor the promised³³⁶ publication of the Pieters-Rubin correspondence. An NP *Jeugbond* eventually took over the reins of *Die Matie*.³³⁷ The *Jeugbond* also concerned itself with the SRC elections, nominating twenty seven

³²² *New Age*, 30.4.1959.

³²³ *Cape Times*, 19.3.1959; *Die Matie*, 25.3.1959; 17.4.1959.

³²⁴ *Cape Times*, 10.3.1959; 16.4.1959.

³²⁵ *ibid.*, 14.4.1959.

³²⁶ *ibid.*, 16.4.1959, *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 10, 23.4.1959.

³²⁷ *Cape Times*, 21.4.1959; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 20 no. 7, 8.5.1959.

³²⁸ *Cape Times*, 21.4.1959; *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 10, 23.4.1959.

³²⁹ *Cape Times*, 26.4.1959.

³³⁰ *ibid.*, 21.4.1959; 23.4.1959.

³³¹ *ibid.*, 22.4.1959; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 20 no. 7, 8.5.1959; *Die Perdeby*, 24.4.1959.

³³² *Cape Times*, 18.4.1959; *Die Matie*, 17.4.1959.

³³³ See for example the editorial in *Die Matie*, 8.8.1958.

³³⁴ *Cape Times*, 18.4.1959; *Die Matie*, 17.4.1959.

³³⁵ *Die Matie*, 29.5.1959; *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 10, 23.4.1959; no. 11, 8.5.1959; *Die Wapad*, 22.5.1959.

³³⁶ *Die Matie*, 25.3.1959.

³³⁷ *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 10, 23.4.1959; no. 11, 8.5.1959.

candidates. However, to ensure that the 'liberals' did not win control of student government through a split vote, the NP persuaded ten candidates to step down.³³⁸

Students at UCT favouring white co-operation optimistically predicted a more liberal SRC. They were disappointed. The NP *Jeugbond* ensured that liberalism, 'the sprout of Satan' and 'vipers' blood' was 'exterminated' and that the 'moulding, rotting influence of the dissentient voice'³³⁹ was silenced. Those believing in the 'true-born *volks* tradition of unanimous democracy'³⁴⁰ triumphed and Roelofse again assumed the presidency.³⁴¹ The new SRC assured its detractors that its victory did not mean the end of white student co-operation or that English-speakers were not welcome at Stellenbosch.³⁴² White co-operation was a plank of Verwoerdian policy too. Evidently the alleged goal of a group of Stellenbosch students, namely to silence all independent thought in student government and prove to the northern universities and Verwoerd that Stellenbosch was fully in accord with Verwoerdian thinking³⁴³ was achieved, probably with the help of the *Ruiterweg*, too. Nico Smith alleges that from the 1960s, the *Ruiterweg* played an important behind-the-scenes role in Afrikaans university SRC elections even going as far as committing electoral fraud to ensure that orthodox Nationalists controlled student government.³⁴⁴

Rhodes too experienced a crisis with its SRC regarding university apartheid and white student co-operation, but returned to NUSAS orthodoxy with the intervention, 'from afar' of the national union. In March 1959 when the Extension of University Education Bill appeared before parliament, Dolf Gruber put before the Rhodes SRC a motion which stated that were Rhodes students not prepared to reject all segregation, which they were not, they should not also then uphold academic non-segregation.³⁴⁵ This was rejected through the efforts of the NUSAS supporters on the SRC. After the intervention of the Rhodes vice-chancellor, a 'watered down' statement of opposition to the Bill was adopted³⁴⁶ but which included a statement that the SRC 'had no objection to the establishment of separate university facilities for Non-Europeans even if they be segregated institutions'.³⁴⁷ Relations between Gruber and the NUSAS Local Committee deteriorated further when Gruber would neither sanction an SRC protest march against the Extension of University Education Bill, nor help the Academic Freedom Committee

³³⁸ *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 11, 8.5.1959; *Dome*, May 1959.

³³⁹ Cited in *Dome*, May 1959.

³⁴⁰ *ibid.*

³⁴¹ *ibid.*; *Irawa*, May 1959; *Die Matie*, 29.5.1959; *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 13, 21.5.1959.

³⁴² *Die Matie*, 29.5.1959.

³⁴³ *Cape Times*, 23.4.1959.

³⁴⁴ N. Smith, *Die Afrikaner Broederbond: belewinge van die binnekant*, Lapa Uitgewers, Pretoria, 1995, pp. 165-166, 169.

³⁴⁵ BC 586 B4.1, Neville Rubin to the Executive, 14.3.1959; M1, Billy Modise to Neville (Rubin), 19.5.1959.

³⁴⁶ BC 586 B4.1, Neville Rubin to the Executive, 14.3.1959.

³⁴⁷ *Irawa*, May 1959.

co-ordinate protest against the said Bill. Gruber only backed down when the staff threatened to organise a march.³⁴⁸

These actions were probably linked to the upcoming inter-SRC conference, white at the insistence of Stellenbosch,³⁴⁹ to be hosted by Rhodes as a follow-up to its 1958 meeting with Stellenbosch and the UOFS. After two months of conflict on the SRC,³⁵⁰ an amended motion proposed by Gruber and John Benyon (a future historian), that a conference of student leaders from the English- and Afrikaans-medium universities be hosted at Rhodes to further white co-operation was finally put before a 'fiery' Rhodes mass meeting on 7 May 1959. It was rejected on the grounds that Rhodes would be sacrificing its principles. Moreover, it was 'inopportune' with the university apartheid Bill before parliament, was 'a slap in the face' to the English universities which had already expressed their disapproval of a restricted conference and would strain Rhodes' harmonious relations with Fort Hare.³⁵¹ Fort Hare threatened to sever all ties with Rhodes were the conference to go ahead.³⁵² Consequently, Gruber and Benyon and seven of their supporters resigned from the SRC. A by-election was held but not before the 'moderates' unsuccessfully attempted to force the resignation of the NUSAS 'extremists' as well.³⁵³ An SRC more 'progressive' and more favourably disposed towards NUSAS was voted into power³⁵⁴ in a ninety percent poll. Subsequently, the NUSAS assembly unanimously condemned the proposed conference³⁵⁵ which, it later transpired, was intended to set up a new student organisation in place of the ASB and NUSAS.³⁵⁶

While the Rhodes and Stellenbosch SRC crises were progressing, an inter-SRC conference was held in Pietermaritzburg and was attended by representatives of UNNE, Durban and the UOFS. The UOFS representatives claimed to be in favour of meeting black students but not mixing with them socially as this was 'contrary to their upbringing'.³⁵⁷ At this time, the UOFS student press was questioning various aspects of university apartheid, including the exclusion of conscience clauses from the new black colleges and the possibility that facilities were not equal to those at the established white universities.³⁵⁸ This was probably the reason for the startling admission by the UOFS

³⁴⁸ BC 586 B4.1, Neville Rubin to the Executive, 15.4.1959.

³⁴⁹ *ibid.*

³⁵⁰ *Rhodeo* vol. 14 no. 2, 1.4.1960.

³⁵¹ *ibid.* vol. 13 no. 3, 30.5.1959.

³⁵² *Rhodeo* vol. 14 no. 2, 1.4.1960.

³⁵³ *ibid.* vol. 13 no. 3, 30.5.1959.

³⁵⁴ BC 586 M1, N. Rubin to I.B.L. Modise, 26.5.1959; B4.1, N. Rubin to the Executive, 18.5.1959.

³⁵⁵ *Rhodeo* vol. 13 no. 5, 26.8.1959; vol. 14 no. 2, 1.4.1960.

³⁵⁶ *Irawa*, May 1959; *Rhodeo* vol. 14 no. 2, 1.4.1960.

³⁵⁷ BC 586 O3.1, 'Minutes of an SRC meeting held on Thursday, 14 May 1959 at 7.45. p.m. in the Staff Common Room, Howard College Building'.

³⁵⁸ *Irawa*, May 1959.

delegates that their SRC's support for separate universities was based on the assumption that black students accepted these, but if in fact apartheid was being forced on them, SRC support would be withdrawn. This conference gave those in favour of co-operation at Durban much to rejoice about.³⁵⁹ Quite evidently, unlike Stellenbosch, the UOFS had not (yet) been brought back to NP orthodoxy.

The return to orthodoxy had the effect of all the Afrikaans-medium universities, including the UOFS, refusing to attend the 1959 NUSAS congress. In this they followed the lead of the new ASB president who turned down the offer of the NUSAS president to extend the congress in order to accommodate the ASB.³⁶⁰ This was widely publicised for propaganda purposes by NUSAS to prove that it was the ASB rather than NUSAS which was responsible for the breakdown in student co-operation. Despite the absence of the Afrikaans centres, the NUSAS assembly discussed NUSAS-ASB-Afrikaans student relations. From a public reading of the correspondence between Rubin and Van der Vyver, it was quite clear to the assembly that there was significant contact in the top echelons of student government but not amongst the rank and file.³⁶¹ Roelofse's anti-Semitic report of the 1958 NUSAS congress and Pieters' overseas smear campaign of NUSAS and his correspondence with Rubin were greeted with shock, outrage and hilarity and comparisons drawn with Nazism.³⁶² The assembly took exception to Roelofse's and Pieters' opinions, a resolution unanimously deploring them as 'inaccurate' and 'unwarranted'.³⁶³

National contact after the passage of the Extension of University Education Act

Although the NUSAS assembly devoted much attention to relations with Afrikaans-speaking students, the main focus of the 1959 NUSAS congress concerned the recently enacted university apartheid, the subject of chapter five. However, of importance to national student co-operation was the decision of NUSAS to redefine its understanding of university autonomy. In effect, NUSAS stated that university autonomy was not an absolute right, in other words, segregated universities were not entitled to remain segregated.³⁶⁴ This significantly shifted the goal posts as far as Stellenbosch's return to NUSAS was concerned. It removed the common ground that existed between NUSAS's most conservative affiliate, Durban, which returned to NUSAS in 1949 on the basis of NUSAS's continued defence of university autonomy and the right to segregate, more or

³⁵⁹ BC 586 O3.1, 'Minutes of an SRC meeting held on Thursday, 14 May 1959 at 7.45. p.m. in the Staff Common Room, Howard College Building'.

³⁶⁰ *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 16, 11.6.1959; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 1, 26.6.1959.

³⁶¹ *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 22, 27.8.1959.

³⁶² *Cape Times*, 2.7.1959; *Rhodeo* vol. 13 no. 5, 26.8.1959.

³⁶³ *Cape Times*, 2.7.1959; BC 586 B1 1960, Correlated Resolutions 32, 33, 34/59, p. 13.

³⁶⁴ *Rhodeo* vol. 13 no. 5, 26.8.1959; *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 22, 27.8.1959.

less the position from which Stellenbosch negotiated its proposed re-affiliation in January 1959. The UP, the party of white South Africanism, was also in the process of losing its common ground. During its congress in August 1959, the liberals rejected the new segregatory measures put forward by the party leadership. This was to lead to the breakaway of the left wing and the creation of the Progressive Party. This is discussed in more detail in chapter five. According to the English press, probably inaccurately, many in the NP hoped that these developments would lead to a coalition with the UP, but if this was so, such a proposal was finally rejected by Verwoerd in August 1959.³⁶⁵

While the UP congress was underway, Roelofse announced the Stellenbosch SRC's intention of establishing a new national federation of students, the South African National Students' Organisation which, once it had 'advanced' sufficiently, would include black students too. Claiming that Stellenbosch had not departed from its apartheid principles, Roelofse informed the open universities that there would be no racial restrictions on their representation,³⁶⁶ thus eliminating one of the obstacles to inter-university co-operation. In justifying the federation, Roelofse argued that both the ASB and NUSAS constitutions were unacceptable to the other's membership thus making both organisations unsuitable vehicles for national student co-operation. NUSAS and the ASB, he believed, would henceforward concentrate on cultural matters,³⁶⁷ presumably in the hope that NUSAS would be transformed into an English-speaking apartheid body. The most important motive however for this federation was providing a 'patriotic' student voice overseas to counteract the devastation wrought by NUSAS. *Irawa*, the UOFS student newspaper claimed that the federation would strive for the establishment of a new anti-communist, nationalist international student organisation committed to the preservation of Western civilisation.³⁶⁸

Before NUSAS could respond to the Stellenbosch initiative, Eric Louw, the far-right wing Minister of Foreign Affairs and partisan of the late Strijdom,³⁶⁹ launched a blistering attack on NUSAS, accusing it (wrongly, only the ASB was present at that point of the conference) of instigating the economic boycott of South Africa called by the recent Pan African Students Conference in Tunisia. He also accused NUSAS of being a member of a non-existent communist international organisation. Moreover, Louw castigated Stellenbosch students for associating themselves with the new federation which he

³⁶⁵ *Cape Times*, 10.8.1959; 29.8.1959.

³⁶⁶ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive; *Cape Times*, 6.8.1959; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 14, 31.8.1959.

³⁶⁷ *Cape Times*, 6.8.1959.

³⁶⁸ *Irawa*, August 1959.

³⁶⁹ D. O' Meara, *Forty lost years: the apartheid state and the politics of the National Party, 1948-1994*, Ohio University Press and Ravan, Athens and Randburg, 1996, pp. 90, 107.

erroneously implied was NUSAS's creation.³⁷⁰ NUSAS, like the Wits student press, surmised that Louw's outburst indicated that elements within the NP were threatened by the Stellenbosch initiative and aimed to sabotage it.³⁷¹ Publicly NUSAS responded by refuting Louw's allegations. It reaffirmed its belief in NUSAS, but nonetheless 'commended' the Stellenbosch initiative and the 'new spirit of co-operation' which it signified and voiced its concern over the fact that Louw was dictating to Stellenbosch students.³⁷² Student leaders at both Stellenbosch³⁷³ and UOFS reacted indignantly to the allegation that NUSAS was involved in the federation plans.³⁷⁴

How did students at the NUSAS-aligned campuses respond to these developments? The UCT student newspaper, *Varsity* reacted overwhelmingly positively claiming erroneously that arrangements were far advanced for a new student organisation to replace both NUSAS and the ASB and that the UCT and Stellenbosch SRC were in the process of ironing out the last obstacles to unity.³⁷⁵ This was patently untrue. As the UCT SRC rejoined, it had had no contact with its Stellenbosch counterparts since the cancellation of the joint meeting earlier that year and moreover declared that NUSAS remained the best basis for national student co-operation.³⁷⁶ At a heated meeting, the UCT SRC refused to endorse a positive resolution welcoming the federation, expressed its reservations about the exclusion of the black universities and elected instead to request more information about the initiative.³⁷⁷

The Wits student press viewed the Stellenbosch initiative with suspicion, arguing that it was based on the false assumptions that students were dissatisfied with NUSAS and that protest against university apartheid would disappear once university apartheid was finally implemented. Moreover, it believed that the federation was a means by which the NP could persuade the black middle class of the reasonableness of both university apartheid and the Bantustans and most importantly, win international student representation which had so far eluded the ASB. The Wits press suggested that Stellenbosch rejoin NUSAS were it sincere in its desire for student co-operation but return to the ASB if its initiative was aimed at domination of the NUSAS-affiliated centres.³⁷⁸ The Rhodes student press

³⁷⁰ *Cape Times*, 12.8.1959.

³⁷¹ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1959; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 14, 31.8.1959.

³⁷² BC 586 B4.1, Neville Rubin to the Executive, 27.8.1959; 'Joint Statement by A. Tsipouras and J. Shingler, President - Elect', *Dome*, August 1959; *Cape Times*, 13.8.1959.

³⁷³ *Cape Times*, 13.8.1959.

³⁷⁴ *Irawa*, August 1959.

³⁷⁵ *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 19, 6.8.1959.

³⁷⁶ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 7.8.1959; *Cape Times*, 7.8.1959; *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 20, 13.8.1959.

³⁷⁷ BC 586 O5.1, 'UCT SRC Minutes of the above Council held on Wednesday, 5th August 1959 at 7.45 p.m in the T.B. Davie Room, Students' Union', p. 7.

³⁷⁸ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 14, 31.8.1959.

recommended 'that the English-speaking universities reconsider their attitude towards co-operation with the Afrikaans universities' in the light of the revelations about the newly established *Ruiterwag* and the leading role played by *Ruiters* in educational and student organisations. Prominent *Ruiters* in close proximity to Rhodes were named and *Rhodeo* speculated whether the 'sinister', 'racialistic' ideals of the *Ruiterwag* would 'infiltrate' the English universities.³⁷⁹

In the end, the federation was a non-starter. In September 1959, the SRCs of the northern Afrikaans universities publicly rejected the Stellenbosch plan. The plan, they argued, implied making a choice between the ASB and the new federation and effectively replaced Christian Nationalism with elements of 'humanism' as the foundation of student organisation. It later transpired that shortly before this, despite the impassioned pleas of Roelofse and Pieters, the same universities, together with Strauss, rejected the scheme even though it flowed from the 1959 ASB congress resolution to establish a new national student body.³⁸⁰

Conclusion

The end of the decade marked, for the time being, the end of white contact and co-operation. With the legislation of the Extension of University Education and Fort Hare Transfer Acts, it was quite clear that contact and co-operation between different races at the 'open' universities and Fort Hare would very soon be something of the past. Moreover, NUSAS was soon openly to defy university apartheid thus making positive relationships with government-supporting students and student bodies even more difficult and unlikely.

³⁷⁹ *Rhodeo* vol. 13 no. 5, 26.8.1959.

³⁸⁰ *Irawa*, August 1959; *Die Wapad*, 8.9.1959; *Rhodeo* vol. 14 no. 2, 30.4.1960.

CHAPTER FIVE

Social segregation, university autonomy and the passage of the Extension of University Education and Fort Hare Transfer Acts, 1959

Introduction

The signing into law of the erroneously named Extension of University Education Act in June 1959 marked the culmination of the NP's fourteen year assault on the admissions policies and racial composition of the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand as well as the attempts by the apartheid ideologues in the Native Affairs Department to create separate ethnic institutions for black university students. Together with the Fort Hare Transfer Act, which expropriated Fort Hare to the state, the Extension of University Education Act facilitated the incorporation of African higher education into the structures of Bantu Education as well as the harnessing of the new colleges to the development of the ethnic polities envisaged by the Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act of 1959.

NUSAS's fourteen year, increasingly sophisticated and organised opposition to university apartheid (particularly at the international level) climaxed in 1959. Its decision to oppose government measures on the tactically inclusive grounds of university autonomy became redundant as university apartheid loomed large but more importantly, became morally indefensible particularly in the eyes of NUSAS's expanding black membership. Thus, a serious re-evaluation of the universities' right to discriminate on racial grounds became imperative, as did the associated contradiction of upholding academic non-segregation while simultaneously practising campus social discrimination.

This chapter will examine the progress of the academic freedom campaign during 1958-9, the divisions within the NUSAS-affiliated student bodies regarding its proselysation and attempts by NUSAS to establish an alternative to university apartheid in the form of the South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED). The parliamentary debates on the two university bills will also be discussed. These shed light on the different interpretations of educational apartheid held by members of the NP. This would have a bearing on the orientation and functioning of the new ethnic colleges during the 1960s and ultimately on student politics of the future. As in the case of NUSAS's academic freedom campaign, the divided UP's performance in parliament demonstrated the immense difficulties of mounting principled, logical and strong opposition to university apartheid based solely on the defence of university autonomy.

Social segregation at Wits and UCT, 1940-1959

Since the 1940s, the SRCs of Wits and UCT, in accordance with their commitment to academic freedom, held that all campus societies should be open to all. However, this policy was not applicable to sports clubs and at Wits, to the Choral Society and University Players, all of which were subject to outside jurisdiction.¹ Dances were a separate and thorny issue. Racially mixed dances were expressly forbidden at Wits by the university authorities.² At UCT however, the University Council ruled in 1944 that no hard and fast rulings would be made regarding social segregation. In 1954, T.B. Davie, the principal of UCT, went further when he pronounced that ultimately in policy and practice there should be complete academic and social equality at the university³ and that the inevitable racial integration of the campus would proceed in a natural, incremental and evolutionary fashion.⁴ In 1953, the UCT SRC effectively abolished the social colour bar following hostile public reaction to the Modern World Society's racially mixed ball. It ruled that all students had equal social rights but in an unstated attempt to dissuade black students from attending dances and attracting unwanted public and government attention, left the exercise of these rights to the discretion of the individual.⁵ The result of SRC and official university policy, or lack thereof, was that by 1960 at UCT, an SRC-appointed commission of inquiry (never made public because of its explosive findings) found that campus social activities and even sports clubs were integrated to a surprising degree.⁶

A similar situation could have pertained at Wits had the university authorities there not introduced new forms of social segregation in the early 1950s to ward off university apartheid. A diverse group of liberals and radicals mobilised to roll back all segregation at Wits in 1953⁷ but with the spectre of apartheid looming over the universities, the divisive issue of social segregation was shelved so as to build a united front in defence of university autonomy.⁸ For tactical reasons too, black students did not actively demonstrate against this dual policy of which they did not

¹ BC 586 O5.1, 'University of Cape Town Students Representative Council: Extracts from 40 page transcript of verbal evidence placed before Separate Universities Commission by Messrs T. Coombe (NUSAS), D. Clain (UCT-SRC), N. Bromberger (UCT-SRC)', nd., c. 1958, pp. 1-3; B. Murray, *Wits the 'open' years, a history of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg 1939-1959*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1997, p. 129.

² B. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

³ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 7, 22.4.1964.

⁴ T.B. Davie, 'The function of a university in a multi-racial society', T.B. Davie and E.E. Harris, *The idea of a university*, South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1954 cited in H. Middelman, 'UCT student reaction to university apartheid 1953-1959', African History II Research Essay, University of Cape Town, 1979, p. 15.

⁵ BC 586 O5.1, 'University of Cape Town Students Representative Council: Extracts from 40 page transcript of verbal evidence placed before Separate Universities Commission by Messrs T. Coombe (NUSAS), D. Clain (UCT-SRC), N. Bromberger (UCT-SRC)', nd., c. 1958, p. 2; C. Larkin, 'Becoming liberal - a history of the National Union of South African Students 1945-1955', MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2001, pp. 103-104.

⁶ BC 586 O5.1, Monica Wilson to 'Mr Melmed', 22.5.1962.

⁷ B. Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-136.

⁸ C. Larkin, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

approve.⁹ However, following the return of Fort Hare and the unequivocal rejection of racism signified by the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the radical left re-introduced the campaign to desegregate Wits in 1957. The liberal SRC president, Magnus Gunther, who had a history of fighting a rear-guard battle against the 'minority red ticket' was deeply concerned that this issue be correctly handled¹⁰ - presumably by liberals and not by the radical left.¹¹ Reopening the social segregation question, particularly at the behest of Stanley Trapido, a future Marxist historian and a member then of the despised and feared COD, risked fracturing the broad campus front constructed against university apartheid. The following year Rose-Innes Phahle, a NEUM-aligned member of the SRC, argued that it was dishonest to defend the concept of academic non-segregation,¹² presumably because of the practice of social segregation. Subsequently, the SRC appointed a commission of inquiry into campus segregation.¹³ When this found in 1959 that the overwhelming majority of faculty councils opposed social discrimination against black students, the Wits SRC and student body reaffirmed their belief that all student functions should be open to all students¹⁴ and accordingly requested the principal to lift his prohibition on mixed functions. However, with the university under attack from the government, new segregatory measures were introduced in early 1959, which barred black students from entering the cafeteria and exam hall while a social function was in progress. Through sustained protest action these new restrictions were eventually lifted.¹⁵ Much of the momentum for this desegregation campaign came from the Students' Fellowship Society, a non-partisan left grouping established for the specific purpose of opposing social segregation at Wits by Frank Adler (associated with the NEUM) and Lionel Morrison (a Treason Trialist, member of the Congress-aligned South African Coloured Peoples' Organisation and later first black president of the British National Union of Journalists). Its inaugural meeting was addressed by Baruch Hirson, a Wits Physics lecturer associated with the NEUM but then also a member of COD.¹⁶

⁹ BC 586 O5.1, 'University of Cape Town Students' Representative Council: Extracts from 40 page transcript of verbal evidence placed before Separate Universities Commission by Messrs. T. Coombe (NUSAS), D. Clain (UCT-SRC), N. Bromberger (UCT-SRC)', nd., c. 1958, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰ BC 586 A2.2, Magnus (Gunther) to Trevor (Coombe) and Neville (Rubin), 28.8.1957; 20.10.1957; 21.10.1957; 23.10.1957.

¹¹ In an article in *Wits Student* in 1959, it was stated that 'leftists seem to be out of favour at Wits' and 'were beyond the pale'. *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 1, 18.2.1959. A letter calling on students to respect leftists and not ridicule them appeared in the student press too somewhat before this.

¹² BC 586 A2.2, Magnus Gunther to Trevor (Coombe), Ros (Traub) and Neville (Rubin), 28.4.1958, p. 4; Magnus Gunther to Ros (Traub), Trevor (Coombe) and Neville (Rubin), 13.6.1958; Trevor (Coombe) to Magnus (Gunther) and Neville (Rubin), 27.5.1958. Rose-Innes Phahle, the son of leading educationists in Alexandra Township, was a member of SOYA and the Progressive Forum, both organisations aligned to the NEUM. B. Hirson, *Revolutions in my life*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1995, p. 256. At this time some people aligned to the NEUM partially abandoned their traditional non-participation tactic, presumably following the split in the NEUM during the late 1950s.

¹³ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, p. 19.

¹⁴ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 10, 16.6.1959; vol. 13 no. 3, 17.3.1961.

¹⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 7, 8.5.1959.

¹⁶ B. Hirson, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

The death of T.B. Davie and the assumption to the UCT principalship of Dr John P. Duminy, formerly of the Pretoria Technical College, who it was feared viewed the SRC as little more than a prefect body under his authority,¹⁷ marked the end of UCT's fluid *laissez faire* social segregation policy. A ball in UCT's Jameson Hall in August 1958, at which a racially mixed group danced ostentatiously with each other, provoked an outraged public reaction, as well as the interest of the security police.¹⁸ The NP press predictably raised the lurid spectre of miscegenation, but in a new disingenuous line of attack, argued that black students were discriminated against at Wits and UCT because of their lack of social rights, an injustice which would be removed with the enactment of university apartheid.¹⁹ Reacting to this NP criticism and believing that it could perhaps still halt the passage of the university apartheid legislation or at least salvage a degree of autonomy, the UCT Council issued a statement expressing its wish that non academic social functions (specifically dances and university accommodation) should accord with the social customs and conventions of the community.²⁰ Duminy interpreted this conservatively to mean that no racially mixed dances could be held on the campus. At a stroke, the tactical decision to shelve the issue of social segregation so as to build a broad alliance against university apartheid fell away. Arguing that the University Council had merely voiced an opinion and not a directive about social practice,²¹ the SRC refused to police social activities and host segregated functions as instructed to do by Duminy.²² Being cognisant of the fact that the majority of UCT students did not support racially open dances,²³ the SRC retained its commitment to evolutionary integration and the ideal of open social functions. It also reiterated the stance of its predecessors that attendance at social functions would remain at the discretion of the individual.²⁴ This did not go far enough for the radical left which uncompromisingly rejected all social segregation.²⁵

In August 1959, against the background of the ANC's recently concluded potato boycott against the ill-treatment and exploitation of farm workers in Bethal, the radical left embarked on a boycott of the newly segregated UCT bus service operated by the state owned enterprise, City Tramways.²⁶ After having exhausted other avenues to resolve the issue, the SRC under future

¹⁷ BC 586 O5.1, Neville (Rubin) to David Clain, 14.2.1958, p. 2.

¹⁸ *Die Burger*, 13.8.1958; 16.8.1958; 26.2.1959; *Cape Times*, 13.8.1959; Honi Soit to *Argus*, 21.8.1958; Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates*, column 3290, 9.4.1959.

¹⁹ *Die Burger*, 14.8.1958.

²⁰ *Cape Times*, 13.8.1958.

²¹ BC 586 O5.1, D. Clain to 'Mr Benfield (Registrar)'.
²² BC 586 O5.1, J.P. Duminy to 'Mr Jowell', 9.12.1958; 'UCT SRC: Minutes of an Extraordinary meeting of the above Council held on Thursday, 11th June (?1959), at 7.45 p.m. in the T.B Davie Room, Students' Union', pp. 2-3.

²³ *Argus*, 14.8.1958; Honi Soit to *Argus*, 21.8.1958.

²⁴ *Argus*, 5.12.1959; *Cape Times*, 7.12.1959; *Varsity*, 30.3.1960.

²⁵ BC 586 O5.1, 'UCT SRC: Minutes of a meeting of the above Council held on Monday, 3rd March, 1959 at 8.0 p.m. in the T.B Davie Room, Students' Union', p. 5; *New Age*, 21.8.1958; 10.12.1959; *Varsity* vol. 17 no. 17, 18.6.1959.

The radical left included SRC members Hillel Ticktin, Dawn Levy, future doctor, Rajkisour and Miss Winokur (perhaps Shula Marks, the radical historian).

²⁶ BC 586 O5.1, UCT SRC Minutes, nd., c. August 1959; *New Age*, 3.9.1959; *Argus*, 28.8.1959; 9.9.1959.

NUSAS president, Adrian Leftwich, narrowly endorsed the bus boycott and helped co-ordinate the alternative transport.²⁷ This '[un]gentlemanly', '[un]civilised' behaviour divided UCT students along potentially violent race and class lines²⁸ – the wealthy white elite physically broke through the picket line and stormed into the bus to avert the withdrawal of the bus service in the face of the very successful boycott²⁹ – and pushed the SRC into unconstitutional struggle along the lines of the Congresses.

The Pietermaritzburg student body was also thrown into turmoil regarding segregation when Anglican and Catholic SRC members persuaded the student government to endorse the controversial recommendation of Joost de Blank, that the Anglican Church open its schools to all races.³⁰ Like most enraged and scandalised white South Africans, including the UP,³¹ the student body rejected this overwhelmingly, claiming that Africans were too irresponsible to be integrated in the classroom and that white school integration was a greater priority.³² The SRC contemplated resigning because of this explicit vote of no confidence in its policy.³³

NUSAS supported these campus desegregation campaigns for both moral and tactical reasons and was particularly anxious to dispel the impression of the black universities and the Congresses that the Wits and UCT SRCs condoned their universities' social segregation policies.³⁴ NUSAS was attempting to woo the uncompromisingly anti-racist UNNE back into its ranks while the Pius the Twelfth Catholic University College voiced its dissatisfaction with the universities' social colour bar and threatened to establish its own national union of students.³⁵

University autonomy

Linked to the inconsistency and hypocrisy of upholding both academic non-segregation and social segregation was the whole issue of university autonomy and the right to determine admissions on a racial basis. University autonomy was drawn sharply into focus by members of the UNNE SRC invited by their UCT counterparts to visit the campus in the hope of ensuring the black university's continued participation in the university apartheid campaign and ultimately its re-affiliation to NUSAS. Raymond Mokoena and Pat Samuels stated that defending university

²⁷ BC 586 O5.1, UCT SRC Executive Meeting, 28.8.1959; Resolution 3.15, p. 4, nd.; Minutes of UCT SRC meeting, 8.9.1959; *New Age*, 3.9.1959.

²⁸ A photograph in *Varsity* of those attending a bus boycott meeting depicted a slight preponderance of black students.

²⁹ *Argus*, 28.8.1959; 9.9.1959.

³⁰ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1958, Annexure 2, 'Report on the activities of the Pietermaritzburg SRC', pp. 73-74; *Nux* no. 1, 11.3.1958.

³¹ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates*, column 3700, 10/11.4.1959.

³² *Nux* no. 1, 11.3.1958.

³³ *ibid.*, no. 2, April 1958.

³⁴ BC 586 O5.1, Neville Rubín to Magnus (Gunther) and David (Clain), 8.8.1958; B4.1, Neville Rubín to the Executive, 14.10.1958; M1, John Gibbon to C.K. Govind, 22.9.1959; John Shingler to C.K. Govind, 6.10.1959; A2.2, Neville Rubín to 'Chip' (Anthony Tsipouras), 28.8.1959; *Cape Times*, 4.7.1959.

³⁵ BC 586 A2.2, Calvin Mokete to Neville Rubín, 8.10.1958; B4.1, Neville Rubín to the Executive, 14.10.1958; O5.1, Neville Rubín to Magnus (Gunther) and David (Clain), 8.8.1958; *Cape Times*, 4.7.1959.

autonomy implied a defence of the entirely unsatisfactory and inferior facilities imposed on black students by the Natal University authorities. Thus their opposition to university apartheid - an inferior education system imposed on black students - was based on opposition to apartheid *in toto*.³⁶ These views accorded with those of most black UCT students, the majority of whom would not participate in the university apartheid campaign because of its limited scope.³⁷ At the 1958 NUSAS congress, Fort Hare similarly questioned NUSAS's support for racially segregated universities, which its defence of university autonomy implied.³⁸ Accordingly, NUSAS decided to revisit its stance on this concept.³⁹ Defending university autonomy was by then a tactical rather than a principled stand. Earlier in 1958, representatives of NUSAS and the Wits and UCT SRCs had indicated to the Commission on Separate University Education (discussed next) that in their official capacities they upheld the right of Stellenbosch to remain segregated but in their private capacities they did not. Moreover, Professor Denis Cowan, a UCT Council member concurred with this view, stating that Stellenbosch's rightful decision to remain segregated was 'most inadvisable'.⁴⁰

Commission on Separate University Education, 1958

The majority report of the Commission on Separate University Education of 1958, which interrogated the manner in which the apartheid colleges were to be organised, was founded on political delusion and an outright lie. The eight NP signatories argued that the black community was allegedly too backward and lacking in responsibility to take the initiative in establishing and financing its own ethnic universities and thus the state would have to do so itself from its own resources.⁴¹ Apart from the fact that the majority of the black population was totally opposed to separate educational institutions, the ethnic colleges would in fact be directly financed by African taxation through drawing on the Bantu Revenue Account.

As pointed out by Beale, the hand of the Native Affairs Department is clearly discernible in the majority report. The new university colleges would play a key role in the development of the Bantu reserves.⁴² Because graduates of the open universities acquired an 'alien and contemptuous attitude towards their own culture'⁴³ and, it was argued, were thus not prepared to serve their own communities,⁴⁴ the new ethnic colleges would be required to produce skilled

³⁶ BC 586 O5.1, 'Appendix: Address by Mr Makoena (sic) and Mr Samuels, 12th May, 1958'.

³⁷ BC 586 O5.1, N. Bromberger, 'University of Cape Town. Report of the UCT-SRC Delegation to 1958 NUSAS Congress', pp. 1- 2.

³⁸ B. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

³⁹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1958, p. 25.

⁴⁰ BC 586 O5.1, David Clain to Neville Rubin, 31.1.1958, pp. 5, 6.

⁴¹ Union of South Africa (UG 32), *Report of the Commission on the Separate University Education Bill*, Cape Times Printer, Parow, 1958, p. 5.

⁴² *ibid.*, pp. 3, 4.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 5.

personnel grounded in their ethnic communities to develop the reserves.⁴⁵ Control of the new colleges would be vested in white state-appointed councils, which it was envisaged would eventually be replaced by black 'advisory councils' composed of state appointees closely linked to Bantu Authorities. Similarly, black 'advisory senates', on which the white state-appointed rectors also served, would replace the initial white senates when the former had completed their 'apprenticeships' and were ready to take over the reins of academic governance.⁴⁶

Political and ideological control was paramount to the state. Because Fort Hare alumni were so opposed to the state takeover of their *alma mater* (an admission that Africans did not support government educational policy), no convocations would be permitted at the new colleges.⁴⁷ Most academic and administrative staff members would be white. Unlike at any other South African university, some would be appointed directly by the Native Affairs Department and all would be subject to public service regulations. Conscience clauses were to be omitted. Religious freedom would be vested in the Minister of Native Affairs. Accordingly, the colleges would be founded on a 'positive' (Christian) religious basis so as to 'live up to our (white Afrikaner) religious national character' and 'to render the highest service to the non-Europeans'.⁴⁸ Apart from the violation of religious and academic freedom which this entailed, critics pointed out that Christianity was at odds with nurturing and promoting traditional African culture.

Representatives of the open universities, the SAIRR, SABRA, NUSAS and its SRCs,⁴⁹ objected to the removal of black students from the open universities, African financing of the colleges, the level of state control envisaged in the colleges' apartheid governing structures and the absence of conscience clauses, though SABRA not the first or the last. The critics argued that the level of state control and the absence of academic freedom and university autonomy that state control implied would deter high quality academic staff from teaching at these institutions. The colleges were thus doomed to eternally inferior academic status.⁵⁰ The minority report authored by the three UP members of the Commission and Margaret Ballinger of the LP, endorsed the objections of the critics.

The NUSAS president, Coombe, and representatives of the Wits, UCT and Pietermaritzburg SRCs appeared before the Commission in January 1958 to answer questions based on their earlier written submissions.⁵¹ NUSAS called into question the *bona fides* of the government in stating that separate black universities were being constructed to advance the interests of the

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 11-18.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴⁹ BC 586 O5.1, David Clain to Neville Rubin, 31.1.1958, pp. 4, 5.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 5; *Varsity* vol. 15 no. 1, 6.3.1958.

⁵¹ BC 586 A2.2, Trevor (Coombe) to Neville (Rubin) and Magnus (Gunther), 21.3.1958, p. 3; Trevor (Coombe) to Magnus (Gunther), 8.5.1958.

black population and that they would not be inferior in any way.⁵² Quoting extensively from NP utterances, Coombe argued that black students were to be removed from the open universities for blatantly racist and political reasons. The Minister of Justice, C.R. Swart, for example, had stated that separate universities were being built because no white in Winburg would tolerate their children attending classes with black students, while Verwoerd had intimated that the Separate Universities Bill was before parliament because the open universities were transforming the 'Bantu' into 'black Englishmen' to 'be used against the Afrikaner'.⁵³ This information was received in absolute silence by the Commission and did not elicit further questions.⁵⁴ In what the UCT SRC representatives believed was an attempt to trap them into contradicting themselves, questions were asked in a 'shrewd' and 'circuitous' fashion.⁵⁵ David Clain and Norman Bromberger refused to accept the NP argument that the social disadvantages suffered by black students at the open universities justified their removal to their own separate institutions. Moreover, they declared that their SRC was not embarrassed by the limited social colour bar operative at UCT because this was a consequence of outside regulations and the social attitudes of white students and not SRC policy. To the shock and consternation of the Commissioners, the UCT SRC and NUSAS stated that they were working towards a common society and entirely integrated education and that their rejection of university apartheid ultimately meant the rejection of the whole ideology of apartheid.⁵⁶

So as to ensure that university apartheid remained in the public eye, NUSAS and its affiliated student bodies picketed the Commission in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Pretoria.⁵⁷ The radical left ('The Party' or 'Johnny and his cohorts') objected to the UCT SRC placards bearing the words 'Western universities are traditionally free and open' and thus produced their own, unsanctioned by the angry SRC, which read 'we students are all against apartheid'.⁵⁸ Thus, as in the past, the dominant liberal left policed their radical counterparts and divided over Cold War ideology as well as the extent to which apartheid should be challenged.

The 1958 general election and the resumption of the academic freedom campaign

The Commission and university apartheid were overshadowed by the general election of April 1958. As in 1953, the UP hoped to trump the NP (still holding a minority of votes) at the polls, though its chances of doing so were slimmer than before. Coloured voters in the Cape, traditionally UP supporters, had finally been removed from the common voters' roll in 1956.

⁵² BC 586 O5.1, David Clain to Neville Rubin, 31.1.1958, p. 7.

⁵³ BC 586 O5.1, 'University of Cape Town Students' Representative Council: Extracts from 40 page transcript of verbal evidence placed before Separate Universities Commission by Messrs. T. Coombe (NUSAS), D. Clain (UCT-SRC), N. Bromberger (UCT-SRC)', nd., c. 1958, pp. 7-8.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 6; *Varsity* vol. 15 no. 1, 6.3.1958.

⁵⁷ BC 586 A2.2, Trevor Coombe to Magnus Gunther, 8.1.1958.

⁵⁸ BC 586 O5.1, David (Clain) to Neville (Rubin), 31.1.1958, pp. 2-3.

Meanwhile, the enfranchisement of eighteen year olds gave the NP an electoral advantage given both the demographic preponderance of Afrikaans-speakers amongst the white population and the Christian-National indoctrination the newly enfranchised had been exposed to at school. The ANC too favoured a united front against apartheid and adopted the slogan 'the Nats must go'. However, the NP further entrenched its power at the expense of the opposition – the UP haemorrhaged more seats to the NP, the Labour Party entirely lost its parliamentary representation (and its place on the Separate Universities Commission) and the LP candidates forfeited their deposits. Thus the spectre of university apartheid loomed large for the first sitting of the new parliament in August 1958.

Immediately after the election, NUSAS and its SRCs again began to put in place the structures required for their even more ambitious campaign to stop university apartheid. Academic freedom committees were again called into existence and negotiations with the university authorities commenced for the *piece de resistance*, a one day closure of the universities to mark the passage of the Bill and thus the racial closure of the 'open' universities' and the ethnification of Fort Hare.⁵⁹ Importantly, the Wits SRC printed sufficient copies of its evidence to the Separate Universities Commission to distribute to all opposition MPs. The new Extension of University Education Bill (renamed in more 'neutral' terms stressing 'university provision' rather than 'separat[ion]' following the recommendation of PUCHE⁶⁰), which included all the Separate University Education Commission's majority report changes to the earlier 1957 Bill, was introduced in parliament on 14 August 1958. Attesting perhaps to the effectiveness of NUSAS's lobbying of the UP, De Villiers Graaff refused the Minister of Education, Arts and Sciences leave to introduce the Bill until the UP was satisfied that the serious inroads into university autonomy intended by the Bill had been removed and that MPs were allowed sufficient time in which to study the Report of the Commission on University Education,⁶¹ which the government had cunningly released only two days before.

Shortly after this, J.G. Strijdom died and the premiership passed to Hendrik Verwoerd, the Minister of Native Affairs who O' Meara avers 'was already far and away the most hated figure in South Africa - and not just amongst the black majority'.⁶² The hand of the apartheid ideologues was strengthened. The Department of Native Affairs was divided into two new separate ministries, the Departments of Bantu Administration and Development and Bantu Education, headed by Department of Native Affairs ideologues M.D.C. de Wet Nel and W.A. Maree

⁵⁹ BC 586 A2.2, Magnus (Gunter) to Trevor (Coombe), Ros (Traub) and Neville (Rubin), 26.4.1958, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁰ M. Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

⁶¹ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates*, 13.8.1958, columns 2066-2067.

⁶² D. O' Meara, *Forty lost years: the apartheid state and the politics of the National Party, 1948-1994*, Ravan and Ohio University Press, Randburg and Athens, 1996, p. 95.

respectively,⁶³ the latter an extraordinary racist who forbade white Bantu Education officials from shaking hands with black people. Shortly before these developments, the Extension of University Education Bill was again delayed,⁶⁴ but not for long it could be surmised. Verwoerd and his new cabinet underlings had a particular interest in imposing direct state control over African higher education and incorporating it into the ideological structures of Bantu Education and would brook no opposition to this plan. Evidence for this can be discerned in Verwoerd's unprecedentedly vicious attack on SABRA members, N.J. Olivier and L.J. du Plessis, for daring to question his former ministry's provisions for the ethnic colleges.⁶⁵

In January 1959, the speech from the throne announced the re-introduction of the Bill during the forthcoming parliamentary session. Rubin, the new NUSAS president, reminded NUSAS executive members that university apartheid had been delayed by a decade because of the national union's sustained opposition to it. He exhorted everyone to 'pull out all the stops during this most difficult time' in the hope that the Bill would again be shelved. He warned that a defeatist attitude would be rewarded with deserved defeat. Already the Durban Academic Freedom Committee had used the argument that students should protest against the apartheid Bill, not because they could stop its passage, but because failing to do so would signify consent and endorsement of government actions.⁶⁶ The Wits SRC president, John Shingler, offered a more sophisticated interpretation of government tactics and how students ought to respond to these. The government employed totalitarian techniques he argued. It attacked again and again by introducing the university apartheid bills and when opposition to these measures was at its most intense, suddenly withdrew them causing the dissipation of all protest. Thus Shingler urged Wits students to maintain the pressure on government,⁶⁷ presumably so that it would not get away with lulling students into a false sense of complacency.

What was particularly significant about the 1959 campaign was its international dimension. In his capacity as international vice-president and representative of the World University Service (WUS), an international student relief body based in Geneva, Rubin spent a good six months abroad in 1957/8⁶⁸ and early 1959. In his WUS capacity, he was able to raise the vast sums of money required by UCT's 'Open University Appeal Fund' and Wits' African Medical Scholarships Trust Fund (twenty five thousand dollars from the USA alone by April 1959)⁶⁹ to enrol as many black students as possible at the open universities before the implementation of university

⁶³ D. Posel, *The making of apartheid 1948-1961: conflict and compromise*, Clarendon and Oxford University Press, Oxford and Cape Town, 1997, pp. 225, 229.

⁶⁴ *Varsity* vol. 16 no. 25, 11.9.1958.

⁶⁵ D. O' Meara, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

⁶⁶ *Dome*, September 1958.

⁶⁷ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 2, 2.3.1959.

⁶⁸ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1957, p. 11.

⁶⁹ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of mass meetings', I.B. Modise, 'Minutes of Mass Meeting held on the 6th April 1959, in the C.U. Hall at 8. p.m. with Mr. N. Rubin'.

apartheid.⁷⁰ During the course of his travels, Rubin participated in the ISC and addressed student unions all over the world about university apartheid, winning their support for NUSAS's campaign. Through his influence, the United States National Student Association debated whether American universities should be lobbied to withhold recognition of degrees conferred by the ethnic colleges and those South African institutions debased by apartheid legislation.⁷¹ This was in fact the first salvo in the campaign to make the new colleges unworkable. Rubin also met important public figures such as African nationalist luminary, Kwame Nkrumah, president of newly independent Ghana, Eleanor Roosevelt, widow of New Deal US president, Franklin D. Roosevelt and patron of the youth, and Adlai Stevenson,⁷² all of whom added their voices to the international protests.

During early 1959, almost three hundred letters and cables from universities in more than fifty countries were sent to Verwoerd deploring the government's actions and requesting that the Bill be withdrawn. Verwoerd famously responded by stating that all the protests went the way of all bad things, namely, straight into his wastepaper basket where they belonged.⁷³ At a later stage, NP politicians tried to play down the scale, significance and spontaneity of this international condemnation by dismissing it as merely the viewpoint and work of one person, Neville Rubin, president of NUSAS⁷⁴ and son of Leslie Rubin, LP member and Senate Native Representative. This provoked the UP's facetious dig that if Rubin was such a commanding and influential figure, the government should consider appointing him to head its five hundred million pounds per annum Information Service which hitherto had been singularly unsuccessful in selling South Africa's apartheid policy overseas.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, despite its bravado, the NP was rattled by the level of international opposition to its plans. The Minister of Education expressed his 'strongest opposition' to those 'student organisations' inside South Africa who organised abroad and facilitated the collection of money intended to thwart the implementation of government policy.⁷⁶ Right winger, H. Rust, reiterated these views but argued that internal and external 'agitation' was aimed at setting the black population against the new universities and instilling hatred against the NP, the government and the white man in South Africa.⁷⁷

The university apartheid bills in parliament, February - June 1959

On 26 February 1959, the Extension of University Education Bill 'to provide for the establishment, maintenance, management and control of university colleges for non-White

⁷⁰ *ibid.*; BC 586 O5.1, UCT SRC Minutes, 3.6.1959, p. 2; *Cape Times*, 10.3.1959; *Contact*, 22.3.1958; *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 17, 6.8.1959.

⁷¹ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1957, p. 11; B4.1, Neville Rubin to the Executive, 3.9.1958.

⁷² BC 586 O5.1, Neville Rubin to Daphne van Rooyen, 19.2.1958.

⁷³ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates*, columns 3194, 8.4.1959; 3231, 3297, 9.4.1959.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 3240-3241, 8.4.1959.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 3288, 9.4.1959.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 3172-3173, 8.4.1959.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 3218-3219, 8.4.1959.

persons' and 'the limitation of the admission of non-White students to certain universities' was introduced by John Vorster, Deputy Minister of Education, Arts and Sciences.⁷⁸ De Villiers Graaff again refused the government permission to introduce its Bill because it was 'incompatible with the pattern of academic freedom and university autonomy obtaining in the Western world'.⁷⁹ In the opinion of *Varsity* this was a 'highly unusual step'⁸⁰ presumably because this radical and decisive action was out of character for the normally timid, vacillating and divided UP, which, terrified of alienating its white electoral support base generally supported the principle of government policy but not its details. The UP stand was endorsed by the Native Representatives, Ballinger and Walter Stanford, as well as by the independent Coloured Assembly Representative, M.W. Holland. The UP continued its resolute opposition to university apartheid, because there was 'nothing whatsoever ...good' in it. On 22 April 1959, the UP called for the withdrawal of the Fort Hare Transfer Bill,⁸¹ intended 'to assign the maintenance, management and control of the University College of Fort Hare to the government' and 'transfer' to the government 'certain assets, rights, liabilities and obligations'.⁸²

During February, April and June 1959, the NP led by Verwoerd and the Ministers and Deputy Minister of Education, Arts and Science, Bantu Education and Bantu Development (T.T. Serfontein, B.J. Vorster, W.A. Maree and M.D.C. de Wet Nel, respectively) justified the removal of black students from the open universities, the establishment of the new ethnic universities and the expropriation of Fort Hare in the positive developmentalist but primordially tribal terms already outlined in the majority report of the Commission into Separate Education. There was no consistency however in whether the new ethnic colleges, rooted in their respective ethnic communities, were to be the agents of cultural and political development or whether they were to be the instruments of their communities.⁸³ The more implicitly *baasskap*-orientated favoured the former for the foreseeable future. The ethnic colleges would be controlled by the white 'trustees' in the racially separate senates and councils who would thus be in a position to direct cultural, political and community development along lines compatible with apartheid and government policy.⁸⁴ Much emphasis was placed on the nurturing of traditional 'Bantu' and, in the context of Fort Hare, 'Xhosa' culture. Drawing on the recently concluded All African Peoples' Conference in Accra (discussed later), where the delegates demanded the recognition and development of African as opposed to Western imperial culture and history,⁸⁵ the NP, specifically the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, argued that that was precisely what the government

⁷⁸ *House of Assembly Debates*, 1535, 26.2.1959.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 1553, 26.2.1959.

⁸⁰ *Varsity* vol. 17 no. 1, 5.3.1959.

⁸¹ *House of Assembly Debates*, 4470, 22.4.1959.

⁸² *ibid.*, 1552, 26.2.1959.

⁸³ *ibid.*, 3662, 10/11.4.1959.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 3676, 10/11.4.1959.

was facilitating by constructing ethnic colleges and insisting that black students leave the open (jingoist) universities at which they were 'bywoners' (squatters).⁸⁶ Townley Williams of the UP pointed out the illogicality and sudden about turn of government policy considering that it had consistently refused over many years to either recognise or subsidise Fort Hare's African languages and Bantu Studies Departments.⁸⁷ While requiring that each ethnic group in South Africa would be accommodated in their own separate ethnic institutions, the NP refused to spell out firstly, what was meant by a 'volksgroep', secondly, whether the white English- and Afrikaans-speaking *volks-groep*e would also be forced into linguistically separate universities and, thirdly, whether all *volks-groep*e formed part of a 'common fatherland'.⁸⁸ The latter was particularly pertinent considering that shortly before the passage of the Fort Hare Transfer Bill, the Promotion of Bantu Self Government Bill was introduced which once passed would become the enabling legislation for the creation of separate ethnic, tribal, self-governing states presumably with separate ethnic citizenships.

The UP was particularly incensed at the racial closure of Wits and UCT and the removal of coloured, Indian and non-Xhosa speakers from Fort Hare. The NP justified the former by quoting (selectively and out of context in the opinion of the UP) from the speeches and utterances of Louis Botha, Jan Smuts and J.H. Hofmeyr. By arguing that none of the three former SAP/UP leaders had ever intended that either UCT or Wits should be racially mixed and had always advocated racially separate universities, the NP attempted to demonstrate the illogicality and inconsistency of the UP's opposition to government policy when it in fact accorded with its own earlier policy.⁸⁹

The UP was on the horns of a dilemma. The right wing of the divided party (conspicuously silent during these debates) was committed to white supremacy while its left wing cautiously favoured a common (middle-class) society founded on Western civilisation. Thus the UP's official rejection of the Extension of University Education Bill, based on the defence of university autonomy was a compromise. Nonetheless, there was a definite feeling among most UP members who spoke during the debates that mixed universities in themselves were a good thing. They facilitated contact and understanding among people to the benefit of race relations, they instilled Western civilisation and common values which were a bulwark against communism, while separate universities were dangerous for the survival of the white race.⁹⁰ Turning the NP's traditional rationale of rejecting racial intermingling on its head, namely, that it nurtured the development of political agitators, race hatred and ultimately a situation akin to the ultimate white fear, the Mau

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 3676-3678, 10/11.4.1959.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 8948, 24.6.1959.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 3264-3269, 9.4.1959.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 1543-1545, 26.2.1959; 3180-3181, 3218, 3244-3245, 8.4.1959.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 3278, 9.4.1959.

Mau in Kenya, Philip Moore argued that it was racially separate educational institutions, like those established for Kenya's Kikuyu-speaking children which were the incubators of agitation and events such as the Mau Mau.⁹¹ Similarly, the liberal wing of the UP (E.G. Malan of Orange Grove, Zac de Beer of Maitland, Helen Suzman of Houghton, Colin Eglin of Pinelands and Douglas Smit of East London City), put a case for a common society which they believed was already in the making at Wits and UCT and at Fort Hare too.

The NP played divide and rule by exploiting the differences and divisions within the UP. Somewhat overstating the case, Verwoerd alleged (correctly) that the conservatives did not want mixed universities while the liberal wing favoured integration *a la* the LP, but because the UP was so desperate to maintain party unity so as to resume power again, the conservatives were prepared not to block the liberals.⁹² However, as Van Niekerk stated, the UP knew that the white electorate did not want integration and thus the UP employed university autonomy as a smokescreen for its real supposedly integrationist intentions.⁹³

The NP continuously goaded UP members about their attitude towards the principle of the Extension of University Education Bill, namely, separate universities or integration.⁹⁴ L. Steenkamp, a centrist, though judging from his alarmed reactions to NUSAS's and its SRCs' oral evidence during the Separate Universities Commission, no integrationist,⁹⁵ steadfastly refused to elaborate on this. He retorted to his NP taunters, including the Deputy Minister of Bantu Education,⁹⁶ that the principle of separate universities had already been laid down by the government and accepted by parliament and moreover, was expressly excluded from discussion by the terms of the 1957-8 parliamentary Commission. Similarly, Suzman evaded a direct answer to NP probing as to whether she would accept the appointment of a black rector and staff at the open universities and retorted that only the government could be 'absurd' and 'arrogant' enough to lay down law for an eventuality perhaps fifty to a hundred years into the future. For the present she advised the NP to leave the matter of staffing to the university authorities whose hands were in any case tied by the mores of white parents who would not hesitate to voice their dissatisfaction and remove their children if race relations at the universities did not meet their satisfaction.⁹⁷

⁹¹ *ibid.*, 4463, 22.4.1959.

⁹² *ibid.*, 3503-4, 10.4.1959.

⁹³ *ibid.*, 3414, 10.4.1959.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 3194, 3217, 3236-7, 8.4.1959; 3289, 9.4.1959; 3394-3395, 3411, 3425, 10.4.1959; 3664, 10/11.4.1959.

⁹⁵ BC 586 O5.1, David Clain to Neville Rubin, 31.1.1958, p. 6; A2.2, Magnus Gunther to 'Trev' (Trevor Coombe), Neville (Rubin) and Ros (Traub), 29.4.1958.

⁹⁶ *House of Assembly Debates*, 3194, 8.4.1959; 3280, 9.4.1959.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 3415, 10.4.1959.

By upholding the right of the universities to decide their own admission policies, the UP was accused of furthering the transformation of UCT and Wits into truly black institutions.⁹⁸ The NP alleged that the university authorities⁹⁹ and definitely the current student leaders at the open universities and Pietermaritzburg – a representative at the latter informing the Separate University Commission that he would have no qualms should his daughter wish to ‘marry a native’¹⁰⁰ - stated quite unambiguously that they favoured an open society and were working towards the abolition of race as a factor in society. This, Verwoerd argued, would lead to the demand for integrated schools and then the ultimate horror, the forcible integration of all educational institutions as was happening in the USA¹⁰¹ following the implementation of the 1954 Brown versus the Board of Education Supreme Court ruling. Graaff dismissed outright the idea of ultimately black universities and open schools (no ‘black Bishops’ and ‘de Blank will not get his way’¹⁰²) but predicted prophetically that were social mores to change and such a situation was to arise, it was irrelevant to both the UP and NP as neither party would be in power as neither would ever allow this to happen.¹⁰³ However, the UP was unable to deny the logic of NP arguments, namely that if the UP wanted to retain the white character of UCT and Wits, it would have to abrogate these institutions’ autonomy to do so and moreover, the university authorities would themselves have to racially discriminate in their admission practices.¹⁰⁴

The UP continued to oppose the removal of black students from the open universities, but did accept the construction of separate black universities if there was a justified need for them, if the black population desired them and if they were ‘good’ universities. It employed divide and rule tactics similar to those of the NP to prove that the ethnic colleges envisaged by the Bill did not fulfil any of these requirements and conditions. Firstly, the UP argued that there was no need for new black universities as so few Africans matriculated¹⁰⁵ and that the government’s own experts believed so too. Accordingly, it challenged the government to release the report of the 1955-6 Van der Walt Commission to allay the suspicion that it was being suppressed because its findings failed to endorse the goals and direction of the Department of Native Affairs’s favoured university policy.¹⁰⁶ This, the furious government did not appear to have done. Secondly, the UP stated that men of the stature of Dr A.B. Xuma, former ANC president, and Professor Z.K. Matthews, sometime acting principal of Fort Hare, opposed the government’s new university

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, 3281, 9.4.1959.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 3303, 3304, 9.4.1959.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, 3201, 8.4.1959.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, 3502, 10.4.1959.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, 3700, 10/11.4.1959. ‘Bishops’, the Diocesan College was an Anglican school in Cape Town attended by Graaff.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, 3700-3703, 10/11.4.1959.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, 3700-3702, 10/11.4.1959.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, 1545-1546, 26.2.1959; 3210-3212, 8.4.1959.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, 1540-1542, 26.2.1959; 3168, 8.4.1959.

policy¹⁰⁷ and thus the NP was challenged to name any legitimate black leader who was in favour of ethnic universities.¹⁰⁸ The only person the NP could come up with was Botha Sigcau, chairperson of the discredited Transkeian Authority, but the Opposition suspected that there had been an element of compulsion in his endorsement of government plans for Fort Hare.¹⁰⁹ Allegedly thousands of traditional leaders in the Northern Transvaal were in favour of an African university in their territories,¹¹⁰ but in reply as to why they had not given evidence to this effect to the Separate Universities Commission, the NP lamely submitted that the traditional leaders were not *au fait* with the terms of reference of the Commission, namely, the operationalisation and administration of universities.¹¹¹ Thirdly, the UP cited the concerns of leading academics at the Afrikaans universities, Professors N.J. Olivier, L.J. du Plessis and J.C. Coetzee (the latter two embroiled in serious trouble with Potchefstroom University for their purportedly anti-government stance¹¹²) to prove that the proposed new ethnic colleges were neither 'good' institutions because of their incipient authoritarianism and abrogation of academic freedom and university autonomy nor would they ever be the intellectual equals of the older white institutions.¹¹³

The UP and the Coloured and Native Representatives rejected the racially separate university governance structures and the civil servant status of the staff at the new colleges, many of whom would be direct state appointees, and the implications of these measures for academic freedom and attracting high quality staff. The Opposition speculated on the probable dire fate which awaited the Fort Hare personnel who indicated on a form sent to them by the Department of Bantu Education that they objected to the transfer of Fort Hare to the government.¹¹⁴ Both the expropriation of Fort Hare and the indoctrination envisaged at the new colleges were likened to the totalitarianism of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, Stanford making an analogy to the Nazi takeover of the University of Heidelberg and the introduction of courses like Aryan Science and Folk History into which the government's courses in Native Administration and History could presumably quite easily morph.¹¹⁵ The Minister of Lands alarmingly alleged that no university had autonomy – all universities derived their powers from the state to which they were ultimately answerable¹¹⁶ - while Fort Hare was even less independent, being subject to Rhodes in terms of both governance and curriculum. Importantly for the future of academic freedom, it was clear that the state intended to make further inroads into university autonomy (as predicted by Graaff)

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, 3200, 8.4.1959.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 1566, 26.2.1959.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, 8958, 24.6.1959.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, 3293, 9.4.1959.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, 1559-1560, 26.2.1959; 3293, 9.4.1959; 3692, 10/11.4.1959.

¹¹² BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, p. 29.

¹¹³ *House of Assembly Debates*, 3188-3190, 3194-3199, 3234, 8.4.1959; 8898-8899, 24.6.1959.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, 8960-8962, 8967, 24.6.1959; D. Williams, *A history of the University College of Fort Hare, South Africa – the 1950s: the waiting years*, Edward Mellen Press, Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter, 2001, pp. 356-357.

¹¹⁵ *House of Assembly Debates*, 3255, 8.4.1959.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, 3431-3433, 10.4.1959.

by also removing the right of the university to determine what it would teach.¹¹⁷ The Minister of Justice warned that no university would be permitted to become a breeding ground of communism, sedition and anti-whiteism or propagate atheism or 'the cult of nakedness'. It accordingly singled out Robert Sobukwe, a lecturer/language assistant at Wits, who had recently assumed the leadership of the newly established militant PAC¹¹⁸ whose members had broken away from the ANC in 1958 because of the latter's multi-racialism and alleged communist and non-African domination.

The Opposition reiterated its misgivings earlier expressed at the Commission into Separate Universities regarding the funding of the university colleges. Firstly, they regarded it as grossly unfair that Africans, already poor and overtaxed, should pay for the construction of the new colleges and their education from their own revenue, and, in the case of Fort Hare, should also lose their subsidy from the Department of Education, Arts and Sciences. They argued that the amounts earmarked by the Department of Native Affairs for the construction and annual running costs of the ethnic colleges were entirely inadequate and would result in inferior institutions.¹¹⁹ Given that these were a fraction of those required to build and maintain the newly opened University of Ghana (slightly over seventy one thousand pounds per annum for a tribal college after ten years of its existence as opposed to over six hundred and seventy thousand pounds for Ghana),¹²⁰ this was a valid point which received much publicity in the student press both before and after the parliamentary debate. J.A.F. Nel claimed that Fort Hare was already inferior because it had failed to expand its limited academic offerings over the years while the number of graduates it had produced was pathetically small.¹²¹ The government intended remedying this supposedly dire situation, he claimed, by giving the 'Bantu' and specifically the Xhosa their own superior institutions. Ballinger disputed the claim that Xhosa-speakers were being given anything at all; in fact Fort Hare was being given to the Department of Native Affairs and African taxpayers were being forced to shoulder the bill for the 'fancies of the hon. prime minister'.¹²² In the opinion of Moore, the takeover of Fort Hare amounted to the 'rape' of the college¹²³ and was moreover, Ballinger argued, expropriation without due compensation for Fort Hare's estimated one million pounds worth of assets. These accusations hit home to the outraged NP who firstly disputed the accusation that there would be no compensation – the churches would receive an amount decided on by the state for their hostel buildings – and rejected out of hand that Fort Hare's assets amounted to anything close to a million pounds. They effectively called Professor

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, 3395, 3406; 10.4.1959.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, 3396-7, 10.4.1959.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, 3624, 3628-3629, 10/11.4.1959.

¹²⁰ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 5, 15.4.1959.

¹²¹ *House of Assembly Debates*, 4482-4483, 22.4.1959.

¹²² *ibid.*, 8923, 24.6.1959.

¹²³ *ibid.*, 4460, 22.4.1959.

Burrows, principal of the college, a liar for claiming so.¹²⁴ Thomas Bowker (Albany) pointed out that in fact, African taxpayers would compensate the churches, and for this reason, speculated that the churches would probably take pity on these hapless victims and would accept less for their assets than their actual worth.¹²⁵

The UP and Ballinger questioned the government's logic in seeking to Christianise the Bantu while simultaneously expelling the churches from Fort Hare. Ballinger claimed that this was a 'perversion' and an attack on both Christianity and the English churches.¹²⁶ Moore asked what kind of outcry would be provoked were the Afrikaans churches treated in such a similarly cavalier fashion.¹²⁷ The NP was in an uproar.¹²⁸ They believed that God was on their side¹²⁹ and as such they were the 'righteous' and not the 'unrighteousness' as implied by the Opposition. Rust denounced Ballinger's words as the 'most terrible things ever said in the House'.¹³⁰ Reiterating the earlier words of the Minister of Bantu Education, that dual control of the university and hostels invited rebellion,¹³¹ he justified government intentions by citing the recommendations of the ill-fated 1955 Fort Hare Commission that the churches be relieved of their residence responsibilities.¹³² However, these justifications were insincere; the NP could not get away from the truth of the Opposition's attacks. Earlier, Rust had stated quite unambiguously that 'liberal agitators' and their 'clergymen' had always been a 'plague' to the Afrikaner people and had always 'obstructed' it and that accordingly he wished they would just 'leave the country'.¹³³ The Jewish community too was singled out by De Wet Nel regarding their publicly voiced concerns, along with other faiths, about the dropping of the conscience clause at the proposed new ethnic colleges.¹³⁴ This omission, Bowker argued, was 'wicked' and took South Africa 'back to the Middle Ages' and to the days of the early English universities when 'Catholics, Quakers and Jews' were prohibited from holding academic office.¹³⁵

Townley Williams argued that if the government intended to Christianise the African population and provide it with universities (neither of which were part of traditional African culture), it was logically embarking on a process of westernisation. He thus asked why the government did not just leave Fort Hare as it was because the government and the current Fort Hare authorities

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, 8931-8932, 24.6.1959.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, 4474-5, 22.4.1959.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, 8924-8925, 24.6.1959.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, 8915, 24.6.1959.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, 8932-3, 24.6.1959.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, 3415, 10.4.1959.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, 8941, 24.6.1959.

¹³¹ *ibid.*, 8933, 24.6.1959.

¹³² *ibid.*, 8941, 24.6.1959.

¹³³ *ibid.*, 3204, 8.4.1959.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, 3174, 8.4.1959.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, 4477, 22.4.1959.

were moving in the same direction.¹³⁶ E.G. Malan and Zac de Beer argued that Western civilisation and truth were one and indivisible. There was no such thing as an ethnic or racial truth they asserted.¹³⁷ For De Beer, Western civilisation was neither exclusively white nor exclusively Christian.¹³⁸ Malan reminded the House that Western civilisation had its origins amongst 'non-whites' in Egypt and Mesopotamia and, perhaps even more galling for race conscious Nationalists, the first book written in Afrikaans was a Malay prayer book authored by a coloured imam for the Afrikaans-speaking coloured community.¹³⁹ Malan and De Beer pleaded with the government to retain the racially open character of UCT and Wits¹⁴⁰ and following NUSAS's responses at the Separate Universities Commission, to allow white students into the ethnic colleges.¹⁴¹ They, like Suzman, believed that in the light of the rapid changes occurring elsewhere on the African continent, it was essential that the traditional South African master-servant/black-white relationship were modified and that white students should meet their black intellectual equals, or even intellectual superiors, on a level of equality¹⁴² – effectively an endorsement of the creation of a multi-racial middle class society rooted in Western values.

The NP had no such intentions and its determination to close the open universities and expropriate Fort Hare was, it on occasions admitted, to ensure that black students had no choice but to go to the new ethnic colleges. This was an admission that no black student desired separate universities and that these new institutions would be inferior to the open universities and the old Fort Hare. That the children of black diplomats would be exempted from the provisions of university apartheid was also such an admission of inferiority. For many in the NP, keeping the universities white was the main thrust of their arguments justifying university apartheid. For the developmentalists like Verwoerd, De Wet Nel and Maree, virulent racism was just below the surface. If Wits and UCT were allowed to remain open and Fort Hare permitted to remain racially undifferentiated as far as its student body, staff accommodation and university governance were concerned, Verwoerd and Maree reasoned that race consciousness would be blunted, especially amongst the younger generation, and that people would believe that at a certain level of society and education apartheid was not applicable and integration was permitted.¹⁴³ In typically eugenicist terms, Verwoerd declared that racial integration was immoral and would lead to the downfall of white civilisation. Carel de Wet too 'hated racial intermingling'. Moreover, 'racial purity' was also of great concern to him. Justifying the transformation of Fort Hare into an exclusively Xhosa institution, De Wet alleged that the Jewish community had kept

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, 8940, 24.6.1959.

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, 3232, 9.4.1959.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, 3668, 10/11.4.1959.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, 3232, 9.4.1959.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, 3233, 9.4.1959.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, 3424, 10.4.1959.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, 4453, 22.4.1959;

itself racially pure because its members had not married out and this racial purity had allowed it to create the independent national Jewish state of Israel. So too then ought the white group help the Xhosa group to preserve its racial purity, presumably so that it too could acquire a racially pure Xhosa national state.¹⁴⁴

Joost Heystek, MP for Waterberg, went further along the racial hygiene/Nazi path than any other member of his party. Quoting from the early twentieth century American eugenicist, George Fergusson¹⁴⁵ (the US eugenics movement directly influenced the holocaust¹⁴⁶) and contemporary US educational race purists, Heystek argued that the more white a person was the more intelligent they were and that hence African-Americans of pure black descent had only sixty nine percent of the intellectual capacity of pure blood white Americans.¹⁴⁷ It was for this reason Heystek claimed, that US school integration had allegedly failed. African-Americans, dismissed as 'retarded'¹⁴⁸ and lacking in 'creative' thinking abilities,¹⁴⁹ supposedly held back their white American class-mates. Thus, each race should be given separate educational institutions which accorded with their 'nature, talents, origin and potential'¹⁵⁰ thus implicitly justifying the provision of inferior facilities to the black population.

Despite some long speeches, the Opposition noted that NP MPs were on the whole reluctant to engage in debate. This was particularly true when Verwoerd, the main architect of the university bills, was absent from the Assembly,¹⁵¹ revealing that the NP had few moral, logical or financial grounds for defending what were effectively racist and authoritarian measures.

While the NP argued for different, inferior black tribal educational university colleges and the racial purification of the hitherto predominantly white universities, and while the official Opposition rejected these plans on the basis of the erosion of what was effectively privileged white university autonomy and academic freedom, it was Douglas Smit, former Secretary of Native Affairs in the last Smuts government, who in the terms of Cape liberalism put university apartheid in the wider context of the increasing harshness and inhumanity of white, particularly Nationalist, oppression of and injustice towards the black population. Commenting on the expropriation of Fort Hare: 'And this is being done under the cloak of Christian National Education, without any consultation with the people whose interests are at stake. No government

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 4494-4495, 22.4.1959.

¹⁴⁵ G.M. Dorr, *Segregation's science: eugenics and society in Virginia*, University of Virginia Press, np., 2008, pp. 83-86, Google book, http://books.google.co.za/books?id=IMBxrgfk_YC&george%20ferguson%20eugenics%20virginia&f=false accessed 2.3.2014.

¹⁴⁶ 'The Nazis' murder of Jews, communists and gypsies in gas chambers was an American idea, 20.2.2010', <http://georgewashington2.blogspot.com/2010/02/nazis-murder-of-jews-communists-and.html> accessed 2.3.2014.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 3302, 9.4.1959.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 3303, 9.4.1959.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 3302, 9.4.1959.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 3306, 9.4.1959.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, 3621, 3646, 10/11.4.1959.

would last for one day if it dared to do any such thing to any European institution in this country. This is only possible in the case of people like the Bantu who have no voice in the Government of their country. If any protest is made by them they are condemned as agitators and sent out into the wilderness where their voices cannot be heard. What future is there for these people? Or what future is there for us Europeans while we mete out such treatment to the mass of the people...?'¹⁵²

The academic freedom campaign during the parliamentary debates, January - June 1959

From the moment the bills were introduced, students from UCT staged day and night vigils outside parliament, often with the assistance of the Black Sash.¹⁵³ Numbers swelled to such an extent that at one stage the protest chain extended a full mile.¹⁵⁴ NP parliamentarians generally ignored the pickets, but Eric Louw, who was particularly vexed at NUSAS's overseas campaign, tauntingly but inaccurately remarked 'No Coloureds? Well well well!'¹⁵⁵ The previous year he had addressed a similar question to a group of female picketers: 'Waiting for their coloured boyfriends to ask them to dance?' From February onwards, similar demonstrations and pickets were staged at Rhodes,¹⁵⁶ Durban,¹⁵⁷ and Pietermaritzburg, students at the latter holding banners stating 'universities not civil service departments' and 'education not indoctrination'.¹⁵⁸ A thousand-strong protest at Wits saw a three hundred foot chain symbolising the bondage of academic freedom being strung along Jan Smuts Avenue.¹⁵⁹ SRCs and Academic Freedom Committees sent telegrams to Verwoerd and De Wet Nel asking them to withdraw the apartheid bills¹⁶⁰ while all students were encouraged to buy postcards to be sent to the government conveying a similar request.¹⁶¹ Academic Freedom Committees organised symposia and lectures on university apartheid,¹⁶² convened meetings addressed by educationists and members of opposition parties and mounted newspaper exhibitions highlighting the historical development of the Extension of University Education and Fort Hare Transfer Bills and facilitated the publication of 'special editions' of the campus newspaper.¹⁶³ A ten foot long banner, probably the largest Wits had ever produced, was strung up above the Great Hall almost obscuring its entrance with its pledge to fight for the restitution of academic freedom.¹⁶⁴ Both the Wits and UCT SRCs invited the Minister of Education, Arts and Sciences, J.J. Serfontein to address their

¹⁵² *ibid.*, 4491, 22.4.1959.

¹⁵³ *Varsity* vol. 17 no. 1, 5.3.1959; no. 2, 11.3.1959 .

¹⁵⁴ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, p. 95; *Argus*, 8.4.1959; *Varsity* vol. 17 no. 19, 6.8.1959.

¹⁵⁵ *Argus*, 8.4.1959.

¹⁵⁶ *Rhodeo* vol. 13 no. 3, 30.5.1959.

¹⁵⁷ BC 586 O3.1, 'Chip' (Anthony Tsipouras) to Saul Bastomsky, 5.2.1959; 'Chip' (Anthony Tsipouras) to Neville Rubin, 6.2.1959.

¹⁵⁸ *Nux* no. 1, 12.3.1959.

¹⁵⁹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 3, 13.3.1959.

¹⁶⁰ BC 586 O3.1, 'Chip' (Anthony Tsipouras) to Saul Bastomsky, 5.2.1959; *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 19, 6.8.1959.

¹⁶¹ BC 586 M1, Isaac B.L. Modise to the General Secretary, 2.4.1959; 'Rhodian' to *Rhodeo* vol. 13 no. 2, 24.4.1959.

¹⁶² *Cape Times*, 31.3.1959.

¹⁶³ *Varsity* vol. 17 no. 7, 2.4.1959; no. 19, 6.8.1959.

¹⁶⁴ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 7, 8.5.1959.

respective student bodies and explain the bills.¹⁶⁵ Both invitations were declined and received much publicity in the student and national press courtesy of NUSAS.

NUSAS remained in close contact with the media, which played its part in the campaign. The introduction of a guillotine limiting the Third Reading and Committee stage of the Extension of University Education Bill to four and five-and-a-half hours respectively and those of the Fort Hare Transfer Bill to an equally restricted time frame, evoked much comment in the public press.¹⁶⁶ The piqued NP angrily blamed the Opposition's obstructionism in opposing the Bill and the agitation from outside for the necessity of these undemocratic measures. While the NP declared that the black population favoured separate universities, the *Cape Times* ran a feature based on interviews with black students at UCT to prove otherwise. Contrary to what the NP was arguing both in and out of parliament, namely, that black students were deprived of a full university life because of social and sporting segregation,¹⁶⁷ black students at UCT told the newspaper that the minor social disabilities which they experienced were far outweighed by the superior education they received at UCT which they would not exchange for a full social and sporting life at one of the government's future tribal colleges.¹⁶⁸

NUSAS and its SRCs timed their campaigns to peak during the Second Reading of the Extension of University Education Bill in April. For this marathon all-night, thirty nine hour debate, the NUSAS president remained on hand to provide the Opposition with important information with which to bolster their arguments.¹⁶⁹ As in 1957, simultaneous nationwide mass meetings and university assemblies presided over and attended by the chancellors, principals, councils, senates, convocations and SRCs of the various NUSAS-affiliated universities preceded the formal marches into the city centres of Cape Town, Johannesburg,¹⁷⁰ Durban,¹⁷¹ Pietermaritzburg,¹⁷² Grahamstown¹⁷³ and Alice. With the passing of the Second Reading, Wits closed for the day after a university assembly pledged itself to the continuing defence of the open universities.¹⁷⁴ Although a nationwide shutdown had been NUSAS's intention, no other student body was able successfully to negotiate this.

During the Second Reading, Rubin presided over an inter-SRC conference in Cape Town attended by representatives of all the NUSAS-affiliated SRCs as well as UNNE. This conference charted the campaign further, confidentially thrashed out plans for defying university apartheid

¹⁶⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, pp. 92, 95; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 3, 13.3.1959.

¹⁶⁶ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, p. 96; *Rhodeo* vol. 13 no. 3, 30.5.1959.

¹⁶⁷ *Die Burger*, 28.3.1959.

¹⁶⁸ *Cape Times*, 11.4.1959.

¹⁶⁹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, p. 89; O3.1, Neville Rubin to Anthony Tsipouras, 9.3.1959.

¹⁷⁰ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 5, 15.4.1959; *Special Edition*, 16.4.1959.

¹⁷¹ *Dome*, April 1959.

¹⁷² BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, p. 96.

¹⁷³ *Rhodeo* vol. 13 no. 2, 24.4.1959.

¹⁷⁴ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 7, 8.5.1959.

when it was implemented and tasked NUSAS with devising a logo depicting the destruction of academic freedom.¹⁷⁵ A jackboot stamping on a shattered Greek column next to the words 'academic freedom' was eventually displayed on all official NUSAS and some SRC stationery.¹⁷⁶ A public statement, which again rejected government plans to violate academic freedom and university autonomy and construct inferior institutions the degrees of which, it warned would not be accepted abroad, was issued with a plea to government to heed the protests from both within and without South Africa and withdraw the bills. Following this, an SRC deputation led by Rubin attempted to procure an interview with J.J. Serfontein, but was as unsuccessful in doing so as the UCT Senate and Council deputation a few weeks before.¹⁷⁷

The campaign overseas heated up too. At the ISC attended by Rubin in Lima, Peru, in early 1959, a motion deprecating government plans for the open universities and Fort Hare was carried,¹⁷⁸ Eric Louw dismissing this as an 'impertinent intrusion'.¹⁷⁹ In what prefigured the great demonstrations of the future Anti-Apartheid Movement, one thousand banner-waving students rallied outside South Africa House in London in March 1959¹⁸⁰ while their leaders attempted unsuccessfully to secure an interview with South Africa's High Commissioner. Sometime later, five thousand students from all parts of Britain marched through London's West End to Hyde Park Corner, there to be addressed by the president of NUS.¹⁸¹ *Dome*, the Durban student newspaper, mentioned a ten thousand-strong London march, allegedly the largest British student protest since the Second World War.¹⁸² Rubin maintained close contact with many academic organisations and their representatives overseas. Dr W. Cook, vice-chancellor of the University of Exeter, was provided with up to date information on university apartheid which he presented to a meeting of the Association of the Universities of the British Commonwealth in Montreal in August 1958.¹⁸³ The Committee on Science and Freedom sent Professor J.H. Bavinck, a Calvinist theologian from the Free University of Amsterdam, to South Africa in 1959. He rejected government measures out of hand, finding the degree of 'pressure, force and compulsion' inherent in the bills their most repugnant feature.¹⁸⁴ The NP was furious at being shamed and betrayed by a European kinsman of their own faith but played down the significance

¹⁷⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, pp. 30, 96; B4.1, Neville Rubin to the Executive, 14.3.1959; *Rhodeo* vol. 13 no. 3, 30.5.1959.

¹⁷⁶ BC 586 A2.2, 'Chip' (Anthony Tsipouras) to John Shingler, 24.12.1959; O3.1, F.N.B. Sharpe to Neville Rubin, 9.11.1959; O5.1, UCT SRC Minutes, 14.10.1959.

¹⁷⁷ *Rhodeo* vol. 13 no. 3, 30.5.1959.

¹⁷⁸ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, p. 92; *Varsity* vol. 17 no. 2, 11.3.1959.

¹⁷⁹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, p. 95.

¹⁸⁰ *Cape Times*, 16.3.1959; *Varsity* vol. 17 no. 6, 26.3.1959.

¹⁸¹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, p. 94.

¹⁸² *Dome*, August 1959.

¹⁸³ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, p. 98.

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

of Bavinck's visit, De Wet Nel dismissing it as merely another NUSAS scheme, which it secretly was.¹⁸⁵

The ASB, in limbo as far as overseas recognition and affiliations were concerned (discussed in the previous chapter), was enraged at the scale and success of NUSAS's international campaign. Following NUSAS's distribution of a three page letter on education, apartheid and the proposed university bills to student unions, universities and political and religious leaders overseas, the ASB's international vice-president, Ben Pieters, accused NUSAS of committing high treason by dragging South Africa's name through the mud. In a replying letter to overseas university principals, Pieters alleged that contrary to the testimony of NUSAS and other 'liberalists and leftists', government policy was 'humanitarian' in the 'long term'. However, he revealed his true eugenicist, crypto-Nazi *baasskap* colours by stating that apartheid sought 'the best biological solution' to South Africa's problems and despite the attempts by apartheid's enemies to 'mongrelise' the world, the ASB was convinced that the 'white race [would] survive' and would 'refuse to be destroyed by those who believe[d] that race mixing [was] an act of the highest moral value'.¹⁸⁶ These utterances received much copy in the student press,¹⁸⁷ again courtesy of NUSAS. NUSAS wished to conscientise its constituency to the particularly dangerous and abhorrent beliefs of some in the NP camp, presumably to both thwart the burgeoning white co-operation movement and propel even greater numbers of students into denouncing university apartheid. At UCT, for example, a 'distinct group of students' (probably white – the majority of black UCT students continued to remain aloof to the campaign) who claimed to uphold academic non-segregation refused to march, picket and demonstrate ostensibly because it was 'childish' and would achieve nothing. However, the more likely reason for their passivity was so as not to alienate students at the Afrikaans-medium universities.

Campus-based academic freedom campaigns

With the passing of the Second Reading in April 1959, many student leaders had begun to concede that university apartheid would finally become a reality. Nonetheless, a united front and the continuing momentum of the campaign had to be maintained. Various arguments were employed to ensure this.

The Wits SRC pointed out that eleven years of student protest had kept university apartheid in abeyance and because of that eleven more waves of black students had been able to receive a quality education at Wits. Saul Bastomsky (then an LP activist who was banned in 1964 for his

¹⁸⁵ BC 586 B4.1, Neville Rubin to the Executive, 14.3.1959.

¹⁸⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 10, 16.6.1959.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*; *Rhodeo* vol. 13 no. 3, 30.5.1959; *Varsity* vol. 17 no. 18, 18.6.1959.

later COD activities),¹⁸⁸ chairperson of the Academic Freedom Committee, reiterated the bravely optimistic words of Tobias, the initiator of the campaign in 1949 and still one of its most important champions, that university apartheid was a temporary setback and Wits should thus prepare for the day when academic freedom was restored. Bastomsky urged students to continue their protests even though the government paid little heed to them because Wits could not remain silent like the German universities which shamefully succumbed without a word to Nazi battery. Moreover, Bastomsky believed that Wits had a liberal tradition which should be defended and nurtured at all costs. To the frequently asked question, why should white students concern themselves with the problems of a few black students when the latter would 'swamp them if they got the chance', he answered that freedom was one and indivisible: a diminution of black rights meant the diminution of white rights. In a more radical vein and certainly at odds with the UP line in parliament, Bastomsky denounced white 'racist' cries of 'swamping' and declared that should Wits become a ninety percent black institution, academic merit alone would remain the sole determinant for admissions to the university.¹⁸⁹

Wits students evidently took heed of these arguments and continued to patronise protests, meetings and demonstrations in their numbers. But it was the unmasking of Priscilla Lefson, Wits's 'blonde police spy', in late February 1959 that injected an additional dose of anti-government fervour into the student body. The largest demonstration in Wits's history at which students carried placards bearing the words 'Keep Wits open, but not to spies' followed a packed to overflowing meeting on academic freedom and spying addressed by Tobias.¹⁹⁰ Lefson, a BA student of British colonial background, had taken over from a police spy on the statutory Wits SRC of 1955 (see chapter two) and was tasked with attending meetings of both NUSAS (including the 1958 congress) and the radical defunct Students Liberal Association, mixing with SRC members and university 'communists' and attending social functions in Johannesburg's wealthy northern suburbs frequented by left-wingers and 'ducktails'.

Wits SRC members, Shingler and Goldstone, together with honorary NUSAS vice-president, Ernie Wentzel, debriefed Lefson in a Johannesburg flat and for propaganda purposes supplied the *Sunday Times* with a recording of her confession. The furious security police raided the homes of the 'interrogators', the Wits SRC office and the NUSAS head office in Cape Town for the incriminating debriefing tape, but in vain.¹⁹¹ The tape, apparently 'misaid' in the NUSAS

¹⁸⁸ 'Who was on the apartheid police spy list?', *IOLnews*, 7.12.2003, www.iol.co.za/news/politics/who-was-on-the-apartheid-police-spy-list-1.11847#U61jlqQU1u accessed 27.6.2014; Na., nd., ? Trial record of David Ernst, AD 1997-B7-07-jpeg.pdf Wits Historical Papers, www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/inventories/.../AD1897-B7-07-jpeg.pdf accessed 27.6.2014.

¹⁸⁹ *Witwatersrand Student Special Edition*, 16.4.1959.

¹⁹⁰ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 3, 13.3.1959; B. Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 318-319.

¹⁹¹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 2, 2.3.1959; no. 4, 26.3.1959; *Varsity* vol. 17 no. 1, 5.3.1959.

office, was only handed over¹⁹² once Shingler and Wentzel were subpoenaed under the Official Secrets Act. This 'heavy handed' action by the government,¹⁹³ its aggressive refusal to admit to other cases of paid campus spies alleged by NUSAS and its SRCs,¹⁹⁴ and the presence of security policemen at student mass meetings since as early as 1949,¹⁹⁵ reveals the already high level of state surveillance and intimidation of the English-medium universities, the government's paranoia of left wing campus political activity and presumably its unease too at the continued united front against university apartheid.

During the run-up to university apartheid, copies of the right wing *SA Observer* appeared on the Rhodes campus carrying articles claiming, for example, that the 'Wits spy' was a persecuted heroine and that university autonomy was a subversive doctrine.¹⁹⁶ This action was probably an attempt by the state and its allies to further the cause of the burgeoning white co-operation movement which had threatened to entirely demobilise the academic freedom campaign at Rhodes during the first half of 1959 (already discussed in chapter four). However, all was not lost for the campaign, directed in the absence of the SRC, by the Academic Freedom Committee and NUSAS Local Committee (one and the same thing). Anti-Nationalist, anti-Afrikaans feelings were running high on the campus at the time and probably fuelled support for the academic freedom campaign and the university-wide demonstration in March 1959, though for English supremacist reasons rather than principled opposition to apartheid. After a 'busy' night in November 1958 by 'Our Heritage Must Be Saved' freedom group – probably an anti-republican grouping akin to the Horticulturalists and Freedom Radio in Natal - the police swooped on Jan Smuts Hall and confiscated 'freedom flags' and other paraphernalia.¹⁹⁷

A struggle for control of the academic freedom campaign at Durban flared up between the SRC and the Academic Freedom Committee, the latter headed by Local NUSAS Committee chair, Brian Sharpe, a militant anti-republican, who was, a couple of years later, to contemplate and perhaps embark on sabotage (discussed in chapters six and nine). With the support of the UNNE SRC, the Academic Freedom Committee decided to stage some kind of militant protest. In August 1958 the inherently cautious university authorities warned that a token strike or any other radical action which did not meet its approval would result in disciplinary action being taken against the organisers.¹⁹⁸ Presumably this was because the university's stunning victory over the government in retaining ownership and control of the Natal Medical School could so easily be reversed by untoward student action. For example, the Dean of the Medical School had already

¹⁹² BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, pp. 104-105.

¹⁹³ B. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

¹⁹⁴ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, pp. 104-105.

¹⁹⁵ P. Tobias, *Into the past: a memoir*, Picador Africa and Wits University Press, 2005, pp. 61-62.

¹⁹⁶ *Rhodes* vol. 13 no. 5, 26.8.1959.

¹⁹⁷ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, p. 104.

¹⁹⁸ BC 586 O3.1, 'AT' (Anthony Tsipouras) to Neville Rubin, 21.8.1958.

sought to distance his institution from NUSAS and the overseas African Medical Students' Trust Fund (AMSTF) fund-raising campaign¹⁹⁹ and feared that a separate bill for the expropriation of the Medical School (like that for Fort Hare) could easily materialise in the future.²⁰⁰ Thus, the SRC shot down the recommendations of the Academic Freedom Committee, reconstituted it by excluding its 'untrustworthy' members²⁰¹ including Sharpe, and pondered protest action which would win the support of all sections of the university.²⁰² Informed of this decision by Sharpe and another member of the NUSAS Local Committee, the UNNE SRC passed a motion of censure on its Durban counterpart.²⁰³ This led to an open breach between the Durban SRC president, Anthony Tsipouras - whose contacts with the ANC and NIC NUSAS hoped to utilise - and the UNNE SRC and NUSAS Local Committee. Tsipouras warned that Durban might leave NUSAS because of the actions of the Local Committee and he himself threatened to resign his position on the NUSAS national executive.²⁰⁴

Further dividing Natal University in the lead up to the passage of the university bills was the decision of UNNE and the Medical School to boycott graduation because seating would, as in the past, remain segregated. A furious principal, E.G. Malherbe, warned the medical students that their action had alienated many people hitherto sympathetic towards them and implied that they were playing into the government's hands. Moreover, he accused them of 'inflict[ing] a gratuitous insult' on their greatest champion, Professor Ian Gordon,²⁰⁵ who was largely responsible for the Natal Medical School being exempted from university apartheid provisions after its staff threatened to resign if they were required to work under any institution other than the University of Natal.²⁰⁶

Despite this conflict and division, a joint march of the Durban and UNNE student bodies did take place. This was largely as a result of the efforts of Tsipouras, who unusually for Durban, led the academic freedom campaign at Natal University²⁰⁷ and remarkably, managed to rouse the Durban student body from its traditional apathy, if not conservative hostility towards 'political' activity. In 'Stormy weather ahead' published in *Dome*, an extraordinarily prescient future-cast aimed at goading students into action and warning them of the consequences of their silence and inaction in the face of government university policy, the writer predicted that by 1966 South Africa would be a republican police state, the tribal colleges would be closed and state

¹⁹⁹ BC 586 M4.2, I. Gordon to E.G. Malherbe, 1.3.1958.

²⁰⁰ BC 586 M4.2, I. Gordon to Trevor Coombe, 24.1.1958.

²⁰¹ *Dome*, April 1959.

²⁰² BC 586 O3.1, University of Natal, Durban SRC Minutes, 19.3.1959, p. 3.

²⁰³ BC 586 O3.1, 'Minutes of the meeting of the Special Committee of the SRC as constituted by Resolution/59, held in Students' Common Room, Memorial Towner Building, at 3.05. pm on 24th March 1959', pp. 1-3.

²⁰⁴ BC 586 O3.1, 'Chip' (Anthony Tsipouras) to Neville Rubin, 17.3.1959.

²⁰⁵ BC 586 O3.1, 'Principal' (E.G. Malherbe) to 'All the Medical School graduates', 'Boycott of graduation ceremony', 2.4.1959.

²⁰⁶ E.G. Malherbe, *Never a dull moment*, Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1981, pp. 312-313.

²⁰⁷ BC 586 O3.1, Trevor Coombe to 'Nev' (Neville Rubin), 'Mag' (Magnus Gunther) and Ros (Traub), 21.9.1958.

indoctrination textbooks would be in use at the other universities. Natal students would be tried for treason in 1964. By 1970, an externally assisted underground movement would be in operation within an environment of economic depression and mass impatience. In 1977, the first uprising would be crushed leading to bitter fighting by 1980. Alarming for Natal students, Britain would refuse all requests for assistance.²⁰⁸

The Extension of University Education Bill was adopted by the House of Assembly on 30 April 1959 by sixty nine votes to forty seven and then went to the Senate where, to the outrage of the Opposition, it was also subjected to a guillotine. The last tactic employed by NUSAS and its SRCs was to petition the Governor-General to withhold his signature of the Bill.²⁰⁹ This he obviously would not do, being a ceremonial government appointee, and the Extension of University Education Bill was signed into law on 12 June 1959. Attention was diverted to the Fort Hare Transfer Bill.

Since the resignation of Clifford Dent following the closure of Fort Hare in 1955, the college was administered by a series of acting principals leading to somewhat directionless *ad hoc* decision-making. In 1958, Professor H. Burrows, an economist from the University of Natal, took over the reins of Fort Hare and immediately took it in hand. The administration was streamlined and strengthened and new degrees in agriculture and accounting were introduced, the state refusing to approve the same in pharmacy and music. More students were offered places at the college in 1959 and, to accommodate them, a building programme was embarked on, paid for out of the institution's meagre resources because the state refused any financial assistance.

An attempt was made to enrich the cultural and social life of the student body and very importantly regularise the often fractious, conflictual relationship between it and the university authorities – the former involved in a bitter and very public nurses strike at Lovedale Hospital.²¹⁰ For this purpose, Burrows invited Coombe to Fort Hare to discuss *inter alia*, effective channels of communication between the student government and the authorities.²¹¹ Testament to the esteem in which Burrows held the NUSAS president and presumably believed Fort Hare students did too, the newly created position of Dean of Students was offered to Coombe, but because of his prior bursary commitments to the Natal Education Department, he was unable to take it up.

Though not the primary aim of Burrows' endeavours, it was hoped that these wide-ranging reforms and innovations would instil and project a sense of purpose, discipline and orderliness at Fort Hare which, along with a united front of student, staff and administration, would win Fort

²⁰⁸ *Dome*, April 1959.

²⁰⁹ BC 586 O5.1, UCT SRC Minutes, 3.6.1959, p. 6; O3.1, 'Minutes of the S.R.C. meeting held in the Students' Common Room, Tower Building, on Thursday 30th July 1959 at 8.0. p.m.', p. 2.

²¹⁰ D. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 359-375, 282, 388-389, 404-5, 448-451.

²¹¹ BC 586 B4.1, Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 14.5.1958, p. 2.

Hare much public sympathy and deter the government from tampering with it. Given the accession to power of Verwoerd and the unrelenting implementation of apartheid on all aspects of black life, this seemed like a naively optimistic hope by late 1958. Adding to the sense of fear and foreboding hanging over the college was the resumption of the Treason Trial in August 1958 in which Z.K. Matthews was a defendant²¹² and the requirement that all women as well as all hitherto undocumented males over sixteen register for reference books in nearby Port Elizabeth following the long delayed and long resisted implementation of the Abolition of Passes and Documents Act of 1952.²¹³

At the same time, the Fort Hare SRC was building up to an all-embracing university apartheid campaign in conjunction with NUSAS – Rubin having visited the campus in late July 1958²¹⁴ - and accordingly invited the Fort Hare Council, Senate, convocation and staff to join it in a series of demonstrations.²¹⁵ With the almost simultaneous release of the Report of the Separate Universities Commission and the introduction in parliament of the Extension of University Education Bill, the SRC under Makiwane, released a denunciation of government plans to the press without the required permission of the college authorities.²¹⁶ The report of the Commission of Inquiry and the Bill which flowed from it were dismissed as ‘a grandiloquent improvement of the diabolical aims ...of apartheid’ and by placing the new tribal colleges under the Native Affairs Department, would lead to a ‘more rapid development towards degradation, mental regimentation and slavery’. The statement concluded by warning the ‘architects of university apartheid’ that while they ‘cherish[ed] the illusion that this corruption will obtain at non-white universities, the same corruption will eventually strangle the throats of the entire population of South Africa’.²¹⁷ An even stronger rejection by the NEUM-aligned Anti-CAD that university apartheid was ‘a process of wringing the necks of Non-Europeans who had any ideas in their head’ and that the new universities would be staffed by ‘intellectual gaolbirds since live enquiring minds would not submit themselves to fascism’²¹⁸ indicated the degree of anger generated in the black community regarding government plans for the universities.

Burrows and the ‘Senate Publications Committee’ objected to the SRC statement arguing that it was ‘vicious’, ‘libellous’ and ‘illiterate’ and accordingly would not allow its publication.²¹⁹ They did however offer to help the SRC formulate a more acceptable statement but the SRC stood firm,

²¹² D. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 412, 419.

²¹³ D. Posel, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-210.

²¹⁴ BC 586 B4.1, Neville Rubin to the Executive, 1.8.1958, pp. 1-2.

²¹⁵ D. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

²¹⁶ BC 586 M1, L. Mutambanengwe to Neville Rubin, 21.10.1958.

²¹⁷ D. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 420-421.

²¹⁸ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, p. 92.

²¹⁹ BC 586 M1 (Z45), ‘Minutes of mass meetings’, Rex Dayal, ‘Of an emergency mass meeting held in the C.U. Hall on Monday, 25th Aug., 1958 at 4.30 p.m.’

it's stand supported by a student mass meeting.²²⁰ Mutambanengwe, an SRC member and leading NUSAS figure on the campus speculated (correctly) that the authorities who intended taking the lead in the academic freedom campaign could not countenance 'forthright protest' and thus expected the student body to simply fit in with their conservative plans.²²¹ The following year another SRC denunciation of the apartheid bills was blocked by the authorities.

Despite this disagreement, the SRC-initiated protest procession through Alice in March 1959 won the support of Burrows and many members of the Senate. Even some of the conservative staff members, who in 1957 had dismissed all protest action as the agitation of their foreign-born LP colleagues (discussed in chapter three), participated because it 'exhibited little of the political connotations' of its predecessor.²²² Moreover, the Fort Hare Lecturers Association mounted a very strong protest in March 1959.²²³ Further evidence of united university action is found in the inclusion of SRC president, I. Majola in the Fort Hare Council, Senate, hostel wardens' and churches' legal defence delegation to Cape Town which appeared before the parliamentary Select Committee of the Fort Hare Transfer Bill in May 1959.²²⁴ Basing his evidence on the ultimately fateful 1955 Duminy Commission Report, P.A.W. Cook of the former Native Affairs Department, railed (inaccurately in the opinion of Majola), that Fort Hare no longer served the purpose for which it was established, namely furthering the education of Xhosa-speakers, because the bulk of its students were coloured and Indian.²²⁵

At the beginning of the 1959 academic year, Majola had exhorted the student body to close ranks as all eyes would be on it as parliament debated university apartheid. He appealed to students to prove that Africans, coloureds and Indians could live and work harmoniously together. He called on everyone to bury their political differences.²²⁶ Even the newly formed, exclusively Africanist PAC branch threw its support behind the academic freedom campaign²²⁷ led by the dominant faction on the SRC, the Fort Hare ANCYL, which uniquely for an ANC branch at that time, had a multi-racial membership.²²⁸ Students were urged to jettison their prejudices and maintain contacts with other universities.²²⁹ When Rubin visited the college

²²⁰ *ibid.*

²²¹ BC 586 M1, L. Mutambanengwe to Neville Rubin, 21.10.1958.

²²² D. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 468.

²²³ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1959, p. 93.

²²⁴ BC 586 M1, (Z45), 'Minutes of mass meetings', I.B. Modise, 'Minutes of an Emergency Mass Meeting held on 8/5/59 at 5p.m. in the C.U. Hall'; 'Minutes of the Mass Meeting held on 10-6-59'.

²²⁵ *ibid.*

²²⁶ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of mass meetings', I.B. Modise, 'Minutes of Mass Meeting held on Wednesday, 18th March, 1959 in the C.U. Hall'.

²²⁷ 'Stanley Mabizela April 19, 1999, Cape Town: Interview by Danny Massey', p. 5, www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpages/DC/oral19990419 accessed 22.11.2012, p. 5; D. Massey, *Under protest: the rise of student resistance at Fort Hare*, UNISA Press, Pretoria, 2010, pp. 141, 243.

²²⁸ 'Stanley Mabizela April 19, 1999, Cape Town: Interview by Danny Massey', p. 5, www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpages/DC/oral19990419 accessed 22.11.2012, p. 5.

²²⁹ BC 586 M1 (Z45), 'Minutes of mass meetings', I.B. Modise, 'Minutes of Mass Meeting held on Wednesday, 18th March, 1959 in the C.U. Hall'.

during the Second Reading of the Extension of University Education Bill, a student mass meeting declared that Fort Hare stood 'four square' behind the national union despite some reservations about its limited political programme and Western foreign policy bias.²³⁰ Despite this student-university united front, the efforts of the parliamentary Opposition and the national and international campaign, the Fort Hare Transfer Bill was finally passed in August 1959. The last act of the student body – not likely to endear it to its soon to be new masters - was a college-sponsored tour of the Union undertaken in July 1959 by a group of African, coloured and Indian students to promote inter-racial understanding and inform South Africans of Fort Hare's achievements and the coming of university apartheid.²³¹

University autonomy and desegregation

With university apartheid on the statute books, the Wits SRC called on its university authorities to abolish all campus social segregation²³² and, like its UCT counterpart, formulated a new radical understanding of university autonomy.²³³ These resolutions formed the foundation of the new NUSAS correlated resolution on university autonomy in its South African context adopted at the 1959 NUSAS congress.²³⁴ The NUSAS resolution²³⁵ declared that university apartheid legislation was an infringement of university autonomy and the four freedoms of the university and that a state-aided university, claiming the right of university autonomy to deny rights to any community on grounds other than academic merit, would be in violation of university autonomy. Indicating a radicalisation of its policy regarding opposition to apartheid by not limiting this opposition to education alone, NUSAS committed itself to opposing not only the breach of autonomy implicit in university apartheid but all policy denying people their rights.²³⁶ Presumably to appease Rhodes and Durban, this resolution implied a rejection of the right of the closed universities to remain closed but unlike the more radical UCT resolution, did not explicitly say

²³⁰ BC 586 M1 (Z45) 'Minutes of mass meetings', I.B. Modise, 'Minutes of Mass Meeting held on the 6th April 1959, in the C.U. Hall at 8. p.m. with Mr. N. Rubin'.

²³¹ *Cape Times*, 3.7.1959.

²³² *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 11 no. 10, 16.6.1959.

²³³ *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 19, 6.6.1959.

²³⁴ *ibid.* no. 22, 27.8.1959.

²³⁵ Some of the Assembly Minutes from the 1950s are absent from the NUSAS archive. Thus it is not possible to cross-check the accuracy of this resolution quoted in *Rhodeo* which read:

'That [NUSAS] believes autonomy to be the independence from the state or other outside control which allows the university to ensure the academic freedom of its members by preserving the rights of the university to determine, according to academic criteria, who shall teach, who shall be taught, what shall be taught and how it shall be taught. Assembly is of the opinion that a) the use of this autonomy by a State-aided university to deny among other things, the right of the community on grounds other than academic merit, constitutes an abuse of this autonomy b) On the other hand, the government of South Africa, by enacting the Extension of University Education and the Fort Hare Transfer Bills, is committing a serious infringement of these freedoms and is unjustifiably overriding the autonomy of South African universities in order to implement its ideology of apartheid. Further assembly realises that education cannot be separated from the society in which it takes place, and that apartheid in education is an integral part of, and stands and falls with, the total policy of apartheid applying to all spheres of South African life. Consequently Assembly is of the opinion that it is not realistic, in the context of the government's present policy of apartheid, to oppose university apartheid solely on the grounds of an infringement of university autonomy, but that it should also be opposed on the grounds that this policy is an infringement of the essential freedom and dignity of the individual.'

Rhodeo vol. 13 no. 5, 26.8.1959.

²³⁶ *ibid.*

so.²³⁷ The UCT SRC resolution stated that 'autonomy was not an end in itself but a means of upholding...academic freedom' and was thus 'not an absolute concept'. Even more controversially, but entirely consistent with state enforced desegregation in US schools, it argued that 'interference in the universities may be legitimate... if the university uses the dogma of autonomy to deny internal freedom or abuses its freedom by the application of non-academic criteria'. Only in the mid-1960s would NUSAS adopt a policy accepting state interference in state-funded higher educational institutions.

Whether the SRCs and student bodies at the closed universities of Natal and Rhodes would adopt the NUSAS autonomy motion was uncertain. The Rhodes student body did not endorse it because it was unable to assemble a mass meeting quorum to do so.²³⁸ Durban however, would not revoke its support for university autonomy until the next decade. However, the authorities at the University of Natal were under increased pressure from many fronts to desegregate the university. In 1959, for example, the Faculty of Arts at Durban undertook an investigation into the racial integration of full and part-time classes on the black and white campuses. A member of the Durban NUSAS Local Committee intended putting a motion of support for this to the student body,²³⁹ but whether this happened or not, is unclear.

South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED)

NUSAS began to put in place its plan to circumvent university apartheid. The South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED) was secretly (it was referred to in code in NUSAS correspondence) set up. This distance education/tutorial college, with branches in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town would provide the funding and facilities necessary for black matriculants to obtain the London General Certificate of Education (A-levels) enabling the successful to enrol for an undergraduate degree (mainly BA and BSc Economics) through the external arm of the University of London. Britzius Tutorial College, a private correspondence institution in Johannesburg was contracted to provide study material and undertake one-on-one tutorials, group classes requiring that SACHED be registered with the state.²⁴⁰ A room was acquired from the Anglican Church in Johannesburg which served as the SACHED common room and library.²⁴¹

²³⁷ This might not be correct. As noted earlier, the 1959 Minutes are not available. A fleeting reference in *Varsity* to the NUSAS autonomy resolution adopted at the annual congress stated that NUSAS accepted that autonomy was not an absolute right. *Varsity* vol. 18 no. 22, 27.8.1959.

²³⁸ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1959, p. 7.

²³⁹ BC 586 O3.1, F.N.B. Sharpe to Neville Rubin, 9.11.1959.

²⁴⁰ E.P. Nonyongo, 'The South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED) Trust', E.P. Nonyongo and T. Ngeengebule, *Learner support services: case studies of DEASA member institutions*, UNISA, Pretoria, 1998, www.populareducation.co.za/.../south-african-committee-higher-education-sached-trust accessed 9.7.2014, pp. 3, 4.

²⁴¹ M. Gevisser, *The dream deferred: Thabo Mbeki and the future of the South African dream*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 2007, p. 132.

Presumably so that the government did not associate SACHED with NUSAS and its anti-university apartheid political activity and thus shut the former down, NUSAS ensured that it was one step removed from its new creation. Together with representatives from academia, Britzius College and civil society bodies like the SAIRR, NUSAS served on the SACHED Committee, chaired by the national union's tireless, long-time ally, Bishop Ambrose Reeves. Anne Welsh, Wits Economics lecturer was the administrator of SACHED and responsible for all academic and financial matters. Rubin through the WUS in Geneva and various student unions abroad secretly facilitated funding.²⁴² Rev. John Collins, Canon of St Paul's Cathedral and founder of Christian Action²⁴³ and the Treason Trial Defence Fund,²⁴⁴ even more clandestinely procured other sources of income in the UK. When the government decreed in late 1959 that no black student not already at the open universities in 1959 could register for the following year, NUSAS's intention of flooding the universities with new black students became inoperable (only four Africans in 1960 received the required ministerial permission and none for medicine and engineering)²⁴⁵ and the funds accrued for this purpose (including AMSTF) were eventually transferred to SACHED. SACHED too was almost aborted when the state intimated in September 1959 that it would stoop to new levels of depravity in thwarting black educational advancement by banning Africans from pursuing correspondence studies. This forced NUSAS to blow its secrecy cover and seek permission from the Department of Bantu Education to launch its programme. This was ultimately granted.²⁴⁶

One of SACHED's first recruits was Thabo Mbeki, the future South African president, who was referred to the institution by ANC stalwart, Walter Sisulu. Mbeki's biographer, Mark Gevisser claimed, presumably on the basis of Mbeki's then understanding of the scheme, that SACHED 'had just been formed to train young Africans, handpicked by the ANC for future leadership'.²⁴⁷ Though this statement is not entirely accurate and moreover implies that the ANC played a role in SACHED's formation, Chief Albert Luthuli, banned president of the ANC, was successfully approached to serve alongside Reeves and the LP's Alan Paton on the SACHED Board of Trustees.²⁴⁸ Though NUSAS was in any case seeking closer co-operation with the African and Indian Congresses, it presumably realised that for SACHED to succeed it had to be seen as legitimate amongst its potential black participants and thus Congress endorsement was essential. SACHED certainly did attract ANC activists, some of them expelled from the ethnic

²⁴² BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1960, pp. 43-44.

²⁴³ BC 586 A2.1, Laurie Geffen to John Shingler, 23.12.1959.

²⁴⁴ The Treason Trial Defence Fund eventually spawned the vast banned International Defence and Aid Fund which secretly channelled one hundred million pounds into South Africa for the legal defence and maintenance of South African political trialists and their dependants between 1956 and 1990.

²⁴⁵ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1960, p. 26.

²⁴⁶ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1960, p. 42.

²⁴⁷ M. Gevisser, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

²⁴⁸ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1960, p. 25.

universities for their political activities. SACHED thus became a kind of fall-back option for student activists. Moreover, the heavily politicised SACHED NUSAS branch in Johannesburg would push the national union much further to the left during the 1960s.

Conclusion

The passage of the Extension of University Education and Fort Hare Transfer Acts marked the closing of one era and the opening of a new one for both the NP government and NUSAS and its affiliates. The removal of black students from the open universities, one component of the Extension of University Education Act, symbolised the first phase of NP rule which was concerned mainly with racially separating all areas of social and political interaction.²⁴⁹ Because the NP was divided over the meaning of apartheid, was insecure in office with limited control over many areas of political and economic governance, and was faced with intensifying black resistance to its rule, apartheid laws were not always immediately implemented and enforced,²⁵⁰ or, as in the case of the universities, enacted.

The eleven year history of the Extension of University Education Act is marked by initial government reluctance to intervene in the universities and a preference firstly, for utilising administrative measures to remove black students from the open universities and secondly, shaping public opinion to press the university authorities to racially segregate their campuses. The Holloway Commission plumped for simply congregating African students at the existing black universities and leaving coloured students where they were. The increasing power of the Department of Native Affairs (a government within a government) ensured that its proposals for five black ethnic university colleges, rejected by the Holloway Commission as impractical and too expensive, were the terms of reference of the 1955-6 Interdepartmental (Van der Walt) Commission and together with the removal of black students from the open universities, the key features of the Separate Universities Bill introduced in 1957. The tremendous civil society opposition to this Bill and reservations within the NP camp about *inter alia*, its authoritarian measures resulted in its being relegated to a parliamentary Select Committee where out of the public eye its potential for scuppering the government's 1958 electoral ambitions was minimised and where it would acquire a measure of legitimacy through the employment of democratic public participation procedures.

The final enactment of the Extension of University Education and Fort Hare Transfer Bills marked the shift to grand apartheid and the adoption of 'multi-nationalism' premised on the fallacy that South Africa was not one nation but a geographical unit composed of multiple

²⁴⁹ D. Welsh, *The rise and fall of apartheid*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 2009, p. 52.

²⁵⁰ D. Posel, 'The apartheid project, 1948-1970', R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager and B. Nasson (eds), *The Cambridge history of South Africa volume 2, 1885-1994*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 352-353.

separate primordial ethnic groups and nations-in-the-making. This shift is marked by the assumption of power of Verwoerd and his Department of Native Affairs ideologues and the enactment of the Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act of 1959. These policy shifts were responses to the triple challenges faced by the NP state namely, the anti-colonial African independence movement, the continued failure of the government to stamp out resistance and impose control over the black majority and lastly, international condemnation of apartheid.²⁵¹ The new ethnic universities under the authoritarian control of their separate white and apprenticeship black governing structures would play a developmental role in the eventually self-governing ethnic territories in which they were situated. Moreover, the establishment of state universities and the expropriation of Fort Hare, marked an extension of Bantu Education into higher education, the elimination of missionary education and the liberal, Western, middle class values it propounded and the assumption of direct control and indoctrination.

The transition to a new era is discernible too in the changing party political landscape. With increasingly repressive security measures and its leadership crippled by the ongoing Treason Trial, the ANC began to deliberate its future tactics and direction. The consumer boycott weapon which directly targeted white political and economic interests was utilised to considerable effect during the Nationalist produce and potato boycotts.

Under the influence of its majority black membership and its increasingly radicalised younger white members, many of the latter recent university graduates with ties to NUSAS, the LP radicalised too. It sought closer co-operation with the ANC and NIC after 1956 and began to toy with new, extra-parliamentary methods of struggle. Like the ANC and its Congress Alliance affiliates, the LP attended the historic All-African Peoples Conference in Accra in December 1958²⁵² where participants, representatives of anti-colonial organisations, mapped out the course for ridding Africa of colonialism and imperialism and committed themselves both to Pan-African unity and assisting one another to freedom and independence. Particular attention was paid to the problems faced by those confronting the white minority regimes of Southern Africa.²⁵³

Despite its radicalisation, the LP's anti-communism remained unchanged. Largely for this reason, many LP members sided with the stridently anti-communist, racially exclusive African nationalist PAC which emerged shortly after the Accra conference, rather than the racially inclusive ANC and Congress Alliance whose multi-racialism was unique on the African continent²⁵⁴ but viewed with suspicion by some Africanist participants at Accra. Nevertheless,

²⁵¹ *ibid.*, pp. 340-342, 349-350.

²⁵² R. Vigne, *Liberals against apartheid: a history of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 1953-1968*, MacMillan and St Martin's, Houndsmill and New York, 1997, p. 70.

²⁵³ V.B. Thompson, *Africa and unity: the evolution of Pan-Africanism*, Longman, London, 1977, pp. 128, 129.

²⁵⁴ J. Lazar, *Against the tide: whites in the struggle against apartheid*, Westview and Mayibuye, Boulder and Bellville, 1994, pp. 218-219.

the LP endorsed the overseas economic boycott of South African goods initiated by the ANC and Patrick van Rensburg, a member of the LP, in 1959. This precipitated the exit of much of the more conservative, often older LP membership,²⁵⁵ a process already begun in 1958 when the party's African members rejected the protection of minority group rights in the constitution of the ostensibly non-racial LP.²⁵⁶

Some of these former LP members found a new political home in the Progressive Party (PP),²⁵⁷ founded by liberal, former UP members whose exit from the party was precipitated by the right wing's racist denunciation of the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act and its refusal to countenance any further alienation of white land required to consolidate the reserves and the future ethnic states. The PP endorsed a common society, a bill of rights and a qualified franchise²⁵⁸ and thus its policy differed little from that of the LP at its inception in 1953. With the advantage of representation in parliament, the PP appeared to be a more viable vehicle for political change than the LP and came to be the party to which a significant number of white students at the NUSAS-affiliated campuses identified, making it a new political force in student politics in the 1960s. The ever-radicalising LP, shorn of its more conservative wing, was the party of choice for radical student activists in the new era unfolding after the legislation of university apartheid.

With the tribal universities set apart in remote, isolated parts of South Africa and under the direct control of apparatchiks hostile to multi-racial contact, the likelihood of these students participating in NUSAS forums was slim. Already, the Department of Native Affairs-appointed principal of the Bantu Normal College in Pretoria (to be incorporated into the new Transvaal ethnic college) had proscribed NUSAS at the college. Thus, NUSAS's function as a non-racial forum was in danger of becoming redundant. For Tobias, the closing of the open universities and the curtailment of the 'beautiful experience' of 'living...a non-segregated existence' led to thoughts of suicide.²⁵⁹ For the current student leaders of the academic freedom campaign, their failure to prevent university apartheid precipitated their further radicalisation. All pretence of upholding university autonomy and the right to segregate was dropped and a determined effort made to desegregate what remained of the open universities. Moreover, government plans for the open universities and tribal colleges would be sabotaged by flooding the former with black students and making the latter unworkable and even ungovernable (discussed in chapter seven). Ultimately, some of this student leadership would come to the conclusion that the only way to

²⁵⁵ R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-109.

²⁵⁶ D. Everatt, 'Liberals, liberalism and the Liberal Party', *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* vol. 11 no. 8, 1988, p. 167.

²⁵⁷ R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-112.

²⁵⁸ T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history*, MacMillan, Houndsmill, 1992, pp. 355-356.

²⁵⁹ P. Tobias, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-187.

bring about fundamental political change in South Africa would be by illegal underground activity and the adoption of violence and sabotage (discussed in chapter nine).

CHAPTER SIX

Sharpeville and the radicalisation of NUSAS policy, 1960-1962

Introduction

Sharpeville was a watershed in South African history and also for NUSAS. Coming so soon after the climax and ultimate failure of the campaign against university apartheid, Sharpeville was the catalyst for the increasing radicalisation of NUSAS's policy and leadership. It was also the catalyst for NUSAS's attempts to carve a meaningful activist role for itself in the struggle to rid South Africa of apartheid, an apartheid, moreover, which in the wake of Sharpeville was bolstered by a security state displaying alarming tendencies towards totalitarianism. South Africans across the political spectrum, including some within the NP, realised that a new racially inclusive political dispensation was a necessity. NUSAS, like many other organisations and individuals, called for the summoning of a new national convention more inclusive than that of 1908 which had brought the Union of South Africa into existence, an event celebrated during the Union festival of April-May 1960. Though a national convention or 'consultation' was endorsed by the student bodies which made up NUSAS, the understanding of what constituted a new political dispensation was interpreted by much of NUSAS's large white membership to mean white unity on the basis of a 'just' policy towards the black majority. Sharpeville thus spawned a significant white student co-operation movement driven by leading figures at both the NUSAS- and ASB-affiliated universities. This posed a threat to NUSAS's hegemony. The white co-operation movement together with the growing conservatism of many white English-speakers in the aftermath of Sharpeville, reflected in the electoral gains of the NP during the 1961 general election, widened the gap between NUSAS's radicalising leadership and its mass student membership. Shortly before Sharpeville, NUSAS took a short, sharp, temporary turn to the right as it desperately attempted to extricate itself from the UK-based economic boycott of South African goods.

Economic Boycott of South African goods

One of the most controversial issues to face NUSAS in the immediate aftermath of the passage of the Extension of University Education and Fort Hare Transfer Acts was the economic boycott of South Africa. In May 1959, the ANC had called for a boycott of certain goods in South Africa (already discussed), which many student leaders in their personal capacities had endorsed as one of the few remaining avenues open for peaceful protest. A similar campaign was launched in Britain in June 1959 by the UK-based Anglophone student organisation, the Committee of African Organisations (CAO), to which the radical SACP-aligned and largely anti-NUSAS South African Students Association (SASA) (transformed in 1958 into the South African Freedom Association) was

affiliated.¹ However, responsibility for the launch of the second UK boycott was undertaken by former Fort Hare SRC president and ANC stalwart, Tennyson Makiwane and without the unanimous backing of the party in South Africa, Patrick van Rensburg of the South African Liberal Party.²

This campaign rapidly gathered momentum in Britain winning the support of the British Labour Party, individual members of the Liberal and Conservative Parties, the trade unions and the student movement.³ To the horror and mystification of NUSAS office bearers who were wholly ignorant of these developments, reports began appearing in the South African press in late November 1959 alleging that NUSAS had initiated the boycott as a protest against university apartheid. Accordingly NUS had voted to mount a boycott of all South African products appearing on a 'list' compiled by NUSAS for this purpose.⁴ From the beginning NUSAS suspected that SASA or other 'Reds' were behind the NUS decision,⁵ presumably because these groups wished to harness the highly effective academic freedom campaign machinery to the sanctions campaign. Without any facts at its disposal, NUSAS nonetheless denied any knowledge of or involvement in the boycott movement and stated that while opposed to apartheid, 'partisan' political issues were outside its sphere of activities.⁶ To make matters worse, this statement was distorted by the South African press, NUSAS being reported as expressing its opposition to the boycott.⁷ This placed NUSAS in the conservative anti-sanctions, pro-government camp and thus at risk of alienating its current, and hoped for future, radical black membership. A statement issued overseas could be similarly misconstrued.⁸ Moreover, NUSAS felt that it could not easily dissociate itself from the overseas boycott as it had become such a powerful force abroad, but at the same time could not possibly risk endorsing it either.⁹ In addition, only the student assembly, which presumably would be difficult to summon during the long December university vacation, could take such a decision. NUSAS thus decided to remain silent until it had more information at its disposal¹⁰ or preferably, until the issue had died down making further statements unnecessary.¹¹

The issue did not go away.¹² The NUS boycott provided the government and its press an excellent stick with which to beat NUSAS, which they did to great effect.¹³ Eric Louw again entered the fray.

¹ Arianna Lissoni, 'Early international networks of solidarity with the South African liberation struggle, c 1945-1960', pp. 20-24, Paper delivered to the Third European Conference on African Studies, Leipzig, 4-9 June 2009, www.uni-leipzig.de/ecas2009/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid+143&itemid+24 accessed 2.2.2012.

² R. Vigne, *Liberals against apartheid: a history of the Liberal Party in South Africa, 1953-68*, MacMillan and St Martin's, Houndsmill and New York, 1997, pp. 106, 108.

³ C. Gurney, 'The Origins of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement', p. 6, <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=5691> accessed 2.2.2012 originally published as 'When the boycott began to bite', *History Today* vol. 49 issue 6, June 1999.

⁴ B1 Presidential Report 1960, p. 61.

⁵ BC 586 A2.1, Laurie Geffen to John Shingler, 23.12.1959; John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 28.12.1959.

⁶ BC 586 A2.3, John (Shingler) to Neville (Rubin), 14.12.1959; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 1, 'First Issue of 1960'.

⁷ BC 586 A2.3, John (Shingler) to Neville (Rubin), 14.12.1959.

⁸ BC 586 A2.1, Laurie Geffen to John Shingler, 23.12.1959.

⁹ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 14.12.1959.

¹⁰ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 28.12.1959; Laurie Geffen to John Shingler, 23.12.1959.

¹¹ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 14.12.1959.

¹² BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 22.1.1959.

With the probable assistance of the ASB,¹⁴ Louw reiterated his accusation made after the Pan African Students Conference (see chapter four) that the communist and unpatriotic NUSAS had instigated the overseas economic boycott just as it had the anti-university apartheid campaign. Presumably because of the close link between the boycott movement and the Congresses and the highly effective international arm of the university apartheid campaign, this barb hit home and placed NUSAS on the defensive. NUSAS considered suing Louw for defamation in accordance with recent NUSAS policy regarding 'communist' allegations,¹⁵ but even though its case was strong,¹⁶ decided that this was too politically risky as 'too many skeletons could be dragged out of the cupboard' in the process.¹⁷ It also considered inserting a clause in the NUSAS constitution rejecting all totalitarianism in education, whether fascist or communist.¹⁸ This was an extraordinarily defensive and capitulatory reaction which would have shifted NUSAS distinctly to the right and redefined it as an 'anti-communist' rather than a 'non-communist' organisation.

In the event, the constitution was not amended as not everyone was in favour of doing so.¹⁹ Moreover, some believed that the issue of communism was separate to that of the boycott.²⁰ With time running out and with potentially dangerous consequences for NUSAS, John Shingler, the new NUSAS president, decided to act decisively and respond to Louw.²¹ Shingler realised that early in the new year student cafeterias around Britain would commence the implementation of the NUS boycott according to the so-called NUSAS list, severely denting NUSAS's public image in South Africa in the process. Failure to extricate itself from the boycott would result in NUSAS forfeiting the support of its more conservative students which it desperately needed to retain, were it to host its proposed multi-racial youth conference and, more controversially, embark on an academic freedom campaign at the newly opened black ethnic colleges. Moreover, the government and UP could use the boycott issue to great effect against NUSAS when parliament re-opened in January.²² Further, the original damage control plan was considered unfeasible.²³ This entailed contacting individually all one hundred and eighty three NUS affiliates and confidentially informing them that it was too dangerous for NUSAS to endorse something as politically explosive as a boycott, either locally or abroad, without jeopardising its other anti-apartheid work in South Africa.²⁴ Ultimately NUSAS went on the offensive in its 'open letter' response to Louw. It denied initiating the boycott, stated its unapologetic opposition to apartheid and in a long catalogue of human rights violations perpetrated

¹³ *Die Transvaler*, 10.12.1959, *Dagbreek en Sondag Nuus*, 13.12.1959.

¹⁴ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 18.12.1959.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ BC 586 A2.1, Laurie Geffen to John Shingler, 23.12.1959.

¹⁸ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 18.12.1959.

¹⁹ *ibid.*; Laurie Geffen to 'Chip' (Anthony Tsipouras), 25.12.1959.

²⁰ BC 586 A2.1, Laurie Geffen to John Shingler, 23.12.1959.

²¹ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 31.12.1959.

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ BC 586 A2.3, Neville (Rubin) to John (Shingler), 23.12.1959.

by the government in pursuit of educational apartheid, created the impression that the government had only itself to blame for the invidious international position in which South Africa found itself.²⁵ After this letter had been dispatched, NUSAS discovered the source of its problems. In November 1959, NUS had overwhelmingly adopted a resolution endorsing the boycott and assuming that, on the basis of its anti-university apartheid campaign, NUSAS would not oppose such a stance, added 'a vague reference to NUSAS and university apartheid'.²⁶ However, a communist student at London University seeking to embarrass and compromise both NUSAS and NUS had inserted into the boycott resolution a clause that it should be prosecuted according to the 'NUSAS list', an entirely fictitious artefact.²⁷

At its annual congress in July 1960, NUSAS had again to reiterate to students at Rhodes, already critical of NUSAS and intent on pursuing white co-operation outside NUSAS, that it had neither compiled a boycott list nor disseminated such a list.²⁸ In addition, the Durban delegation proposed a resolution ratifying Shingler's 'open letter' to Louw in which he had stated that NUSAS was anti-communist. This was ultimately withdrawn in favour of another which made no reference to anti-communism and threatened legal action against anyone defaming the national union.²⁹ There were other consequences of the 'boycott affair'. Dr J.P. Duminy, principal of UCT, declined a vice-presidency of NUSAS - an honorary position customarily accorded to and accepted by all the principals of NUSAS-affiliated centres - ostensibly because of the national union's role in the university apartheid campaign,³⁰ but also the Afrikaans press averred, because of the sanctions campaign. NUSAS remained fearful of identifying itself with the boycott and feared too that radical black students might in the future persuade NUSAS to do so. This, it realised, it would be morally obliged to do but as a consequence, NUSAS would fissure,³¹ a situation already discernible in the LP, the political home of the NUSAS leadership.

Ernie Wentzel, a leading LP member, argued that his party's endorsement of the sanctions campaign marked its turning point. The LP, hitherto a moderate party committed to constitutional change, shifted in the aftermath of the sanctions debate to one 'groping towards participation in mainstream black power politics'.³² For NUSAS, the boycott movement could not be considered a turning point and certainly not a progressive one. NUSAS had been involuntarily drawn into the boycott, had refused to take any stand, and considered an anti-communist constitutional amendment. The boycott issue served to expose the vulnerability and impotence of the national

²⁵ BC 586 A2.3, Neville (Rubin) to John (Shingler), 30.12.1959; B1 Presidential Report 1960, pp. 64-66.

²⁶ BC 586 A2.3, Neville (Rubin) to John (Shingler) and Ros (Traub), 23.12.1959; B1 Presidential Report 1960, pp. 62-63.

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1960, p. 16.

²⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 62.

³¹ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to Adrian Leftwich, 2.4.1961.

³² R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

union in the face of challenges outside its limited educational and non-party political framework. In terms of tactics, NUSAS had already partially abandoned constitutionalism by adopting the weapons of struggle associated with the radical liberation movements and was also hesitantly co-operating with the Congress youth leagues in the hosting of a multi-racial youth conference as a prelude to establishing a national youth organisation affiliated to the World Assembly of Youth.³³ However, it was the events and consequences of Sharpeville that marked the turning point in NUSAS. The national union realised that its limited political programme was no longer sustainable or justifiable and thus despite its conservative white student base, it finally jettisoned its 'students-as-such' position allowing it the freedom to dip its feet into what remained of mainstream black politics.

Sharpeville

Shortly after the official launch of the boycott movement in the UK, Harold MacMillan, the British Conservative Party prime minister, arrived in South Africa on the last leg of his tour of Britain's current and former African colonial possessions. In a speech to the South African parliament in Cape Town in February 1960, MacMillan signaled his government's assent to African nationalism and the rapid decolonisation taking place on the continent by stating that a 'wind of change' was blowing over Africa. As importantly, he politely warned that Britain would withdraw its support for South Africa (though he rejected the economic boycott) because it found aspects of the country's policies repugnant and blowing against the spirit of the times.³⁴ Further, he hoped that South Africa would grant individual rights to its black population and 'share power in society on the basis of individual merit alone'.³⁵ Six weeks later there occurred the events which came to be known as Sharpeville. For a short time it appeared that South Africa would follow the rest of Africa and embark on fundamental change. As with the boycott movement, NUSAS was drawn into it, but in this instance, was fundamentally changed by it.

During 1959, both the ANC and PAC laid the foundations for their separate campaigns to rid South Africa of the hated pass laws. The ANC's was to assume on 31 March 1960 and culminate on 31 May 1960, the latter coinciding with the government's Union Festival commemorating fifty years of South African independence. Through the employment of the militant tactics of the ANCYL's Programme of Action and the Defiance Campaign, the PAC aimed to effect the abolition of the pass laws and the implementation of a minimum wage as a prelude to securing the final liberation of South Africa by 1963. Thus Africans were urged by the PAC to court arrest by peacefully presenting

³³ BC 586 A2.1, Laurie Geffen to John Shingler, 23.12.1959; Laurie Geffen to 'Chip' (Anthony Tsipouras), 25.12.1959; B1 Presidential Report 1960, pp. 74-75.

³⁴ S. Dubow, 'MacMillan, Verwoerd and the 'wind of change' speech', L. Butler and S. Stockwell (eds), *The wind of change: Harold MacMillan and British decolonisation*, Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke, 2013, pp. 20, 23-4, 30.

³⁵ H. Giliomee, *The last Afrikaner leaders: a supreme test of power*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2012, p. 73.

themselves passless at government offices and police stations on 21 March 1960.³⁶ Areas with large concentrations of migrant workers and where the pass laws were even more zealously applied than elsewhere, like in Vereeniging on the Witwatersrand (the scene of the recent Colebrook colliery accident), and in the Cape Town townships of Langa and Nyanga (where the Coloured Labour Preference policy was in effect), responded to the PAC's call.³⁷ A peaceful crowd of seven thousand pass protesters gathered outside the Sharpeville (Vereeniging) police station was shot at by the police, killing sixty nine people. This cold blooded massacre was repeated later that night on a smaller scale at a six thousand-strong rally in Langa.³⁸ Against the background of general police harassment, the people of Vereeniging mourned their dead with a week-long general strike while the Cape Town townships moved to a position of near insurrection.

Students were drawn into these events, mostly involuntarily, many of them being exposed for the first time to the demands of the black majority and the methods by which these demands would be attained. On 24 March 1960, meetings were banned for three months.³⁹ Rhodes students demonstrated against this, walking three abreast to the cathedral to avoid constituting a march⁴⁰ while six hundred Natal students registered their opposition to this in a pre-dawn march through the streets of Pietermaritzburg.⁴¹ NUSAS obliquely supported these protests, stating publicly that 'the actions of the students flowed directly from the actions of the government'.⁴² On 25 March, Philip Kgosana, a UCT student and the Cape Town leader of the PAC, led a demonstration outside the Caledon Square police station, and with LP intervention, was instrumental in having the pass laws in the Cape suspended. This suspension was extended to the rest of the country the following day. Albert Luthuli publicly burned his pass and called on others to do the same. In an attempt to win back the ground lost to the PAC, Luthuli called for a stay-away on 28 March to mourn those killed the previous week. Hundreds of thousands heeded his call, presaging a protracted strike and the biggest work-stoppage in South Africa's history, seriously inconveniencing and frightening whites.⁴³ Some UCT students responded by scabbing at the dairies, docks and fish factories⁴⁴ which had come to a standstill. A few of their progressive counterparts joined the LP and the COD in transporting food to the townships.⁴⁵ Four UCT students, including the independent Marxist, Hillel Tickin, were arrested

³⁶ T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, Ravan, Braamfontein, 1983, pp. 201-205; B. Pogrand, *How can a man die better... Sobukwe and apartheid*, Peter Halban, London, 1990, pp. 110-128.

³⁷ T. Lodge, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-208.

³⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 209-210; B. Pogrand, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-136; R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-119.

³⁹ R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁴⁰ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1960, p. 68; A2.1, Hugh Lewin to 'Hoek' (Adrian Leftwich), 4.1.1960 [sic] 1961; T.D. Moodie, 'The student at Rhodes in the early apartheid era: a memoir', *African Sociological Review* vol. 9 no. 1, 2005, p. 145.

⁴¹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1960, p. 68; B4.1, John Shingler to the Executive, 2.5.1960, p. 2.

⁴² BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1960, p. 9.

⁴³ T. Lodge, *Sharpeville: an apartheid massacre and its consequences*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011, pp. 140-144; R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-123.

⁴⁴ Alan Brookes to *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 9, 13.4.1960.

⁴⁵ *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 12, 11.5.1960.

for distributing stay-away handbills in the townships.⁴⁶ A two hundred-strong mass meeting at UCT, convened by NUSAS and LP stalwarts, Neville Rubin, Adrian Leftwich and Kenney Parker discussed the arrests. Students were warned that they 'could no longer consider themselves to be aloof from the struggle' in that they would 'have to choose sides' and 'those who are not with us are against us'.⁴⁷ Following the LP, the UCT student body decided to contribute to a fund to help families whose relatives had been shot at Sharpeville and Langa.⁴⁸

By this time there was a sense that the government had lost its bearings and self-confidence, that the initiative had moved to the black majority and that white supremacy could come to an end.⁴⁹ On 30 March, Kgosana led a march of ten thousand people from Langa to the centre of Cape Town,⁵⁰ cutting through the UCT campus on the way. Lectures were cancelled by the university authorities and students urged to take precautions.⁵¹ By the end of the day a draconian state of emergency had been declared over most of the country which restricted meetings and the press, imposed a curfew and suspended *habeas corpus*. Thousands of activists from the PAC, the Congresses and the LP were detained,⁵² including Wentzel. Pietermaritzburg students protested against the detention of their academic staff while the Wits authorities banned all meetings of a political nature including one to be addressed by Shingler.⁵³ The Rhodes Senate censored the student newspaper, *Rhodeo*, in compliance with the press restrictions⁵⁴ but in one case, the *Rhodeo* editor blacked out all the offending text rather than remove it altogether in protest against the state of emergency.⁵⁵ These events marked the end of student protest for at least a month. From April a steel cordon of the army, navy and police surrounded the Cape Town townships⁵⁶ and like other whites around the country, UCT students were called up for emergency army duty by the Active Citizen Force. The UCT SRC obtained concessions for those affected,⁵⁷ presumably because the SRC disapproved of this conscription.⁵⁸ On 7 April 1960, the pass laws were re-imposed and on 8 April 1960, parliament passed legislation outlawing the ANC and PAC, the only opposition to this second measure coming from the PP. The following day, a near fatal assassination attempt was made on Verwoerd while he was opening the Rand Easter Show in Johannesburg. The events of Sharpeville shook white South

⁴⁶ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1960, pp. 67, 68; *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 7, 30.3.1960; no. 12, 11.5.1960; 'Life story of Hillel Ticktin', <http://www.diversityinretirement.net/files/Mandate> accessed 30.1.2012.

⁴⁷ *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 7, 30.3.1960.

⁴⁸ *Nux* no. 3, 25.5.1960.

⁴⁹ R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 125.

⁵¹ *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 8, 7.4.1960.

⁵² R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127.

⁵³ BC 586 B4.1, John Shingler to the Executive, 21.5.1960; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 2, 26.4.1960.

⁵⁴ S. Greyling, 'Rhodes University during the segregation and apartheid eras, 1933 to 1990', MA dissertation, Rhodes University, 2007, p. 69.

⁵⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report, p. 68.

⁵⁶ R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁵⁷ BC 586 O5.1, UCT SRC Minutes, 13.4.1960, p. 1; *Varsity*, 10.8.1960.

⁵⁸ In 1961 NUSAS was to reject conscription. See later.

Africa to its core. Capital flowed out of the country⁵⁹ and many English-speaking whites made preparatory plans to emigrate.⁶⁰

Student leaders acted cautiously, if at all, during the initial stages of the state of emergency. This was because the emergency regulations were so all-encompassing that any action could be deemed illegal. In addition, the university authorities imposed their own clampdowns. There was also a dearth of information as only LP publications dared defy the media restrictions while the Congress press (*New Age*) ceased publication, its staff in detention. Thus the government's propaganda that communist agitation was behind the events of Sharpeville, a view enthusiastically endorsed by the UP, held sway.⁶¹ Tom Lodge argued that by the end of the 1950s radical whites were 'infected... with a sense of crisis and of imminent change'.⁶² This was certainly true of many students⁶³ but in the case of the NUSAS leadership, this sense of crisis became a sense of paralysis immediately after the imposition of the state of emergency. Shingler admitted that he did not fight the Wits principal's proscription of meetings on campus because of the general crisis of the times, but in retrospect believed that this was not the right approach.⁶⁴ Communications with the outside world also broke down during the state of emergency. This resulted in COSEC issuing a statement on the situation in South Africa, assuming, as in the NUS-economic boycott issue, that this would meet NUSAS's approval. It did not, because of the emergency restrictions. Overseas student organisations were puzzled by NUSAS's reticence and caution regarding such an important event that had reverberated around the world.⁶⁵ It was only in June 1960, following the actions of some of its SRCs and the softening of some of the emergency restrictions, that NUSAS called for the lifting of the state of emergency as it abrogated fundamental human rights and the ideals of a university and had a negative effect on education.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, the NUSAS president was concerned that this statement was 'too far ahead of the conservative SRCs'⁶⁷ which did nonetheless unanimously ratify it at the July congress.

Passing a resolution on the state of emergency led to further conflict within already divided student bodies and SRCs. Some student leaders wished to take a stand while others urged caution. Dawn Levy, the radical chairperson of the NUSAS Local Committee, together with Hillel Ticktin, walked out of a UCT SRC meeting when that body would pass only a watered down version of their much

⁵⁹ T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history, (fourth edition)*, MacMillan, Houndsmill, 1992, pp. 359-360; D. O' Meara, *Forty lost years: the apartheid state and the politics of the National Party 1948-1994*, Ravan and Ohio, Randburg and Athens, 1996, p. 101.

⁶⁰ J.C. Gordon Brown, *Blazes along a diplomatic trail: memoir of four posts in the Canadian Foreign Service*, Trafford, Victoria, 2000, p. 37.

⁶¹ R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁶² T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945, op. cit.*, p. 217.

⁶³ See chapter five and the political forecast for the 1960s and 70s set out in *Dome* in April 1959.

⁶⁴ BC 586 B4.1, John Shingler to the Executive, 2.5.1960, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁵ BC 586 A2.1, Laurie Geffen to John Shingler, 5.5.1960, pp. 3-4; John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 18.5.1960, p. 1.

⁶⁶ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 17.6.1960, p. 2; B1 Congress Minutes 1960, pp. 32-33.

⁶⁷ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Lawrence Geffen, 27.6.1960; B1 Congress Minutes 1960, pp. 32-33.

stronger motion deploring the disappearance of students detained without trial.⁶⁸ However, some weeks later the SRC, far from unanimously, did pass a Tickin-Levy motion calling on the government to end the state of emergency and release or charge detainees.⁶⁹ This was probably to pre-empt the adoption of a far more radical resolution on the emergency to be put before a student mass meeting by a progressive united front formed for this purpose, which included a call on the government to accede to the demands of the people of South Africa for freedom.⁷⁰

At Wits the SRC seemed both paralysed by personal conflict between its members and afraid of taking a stand.⁷¹ Leadership and decisive action thus passed to a loosely united group of left wing and, the NUSAS president suspected, 'non-communist'⁷² factions, working under a cloak of secrecy and suspicious of the SRC.⁷³ This appeared to be an embryonic united front of radical liberals, independent Marxists, the NEUM and the COD. Such a multi-ideological front - in the form of electoral 'tickets'⁷⁴ and the Students' Fellowship Society⁷⁵ - had already taken shape in 1959 to fight campus social segregation. This 'front' then was responsible for a four hundred-strong illegal march to the Johannesburg Fort in May 1960 to demand the charge or release of those students and staff incarcerated there. The event was punctuated by ugly confrontations with state authorities and those disapproving of the protest⁷⁶ while the follow-up meeting was disrupted by 'rowdies', probably augmented by outsiders who hurled racial insults at the protest organisers.⁷⁷ Two weeks later, the illegal march to the Fort was repeated, resulting in the arrest of six participants. An anti-arrest sit-down strike on the Wits campus came to an abrupt end when the participants were physically attacked by tomato-throwing counter-demonstrators.⁷⁸

In the meantime, the detainees embarked on a hunger strike. This became the vehicle for an embryonic united front, like at Wits, emerging at UCT. Following an address by the LP's Patrick Duncan - a prominent role player in the Cape anti-pass campaign and confidante of Philip Kgosana - the radical Students Fellowship Society and surprisingly, the non-political YMCA embarked on a hunger strike in sympathy with the detainees. They were joined by two hundred students, including

⁶⁸ *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 10, 21.4.1960.

⁶⁹ *ibid.* no. 14, 18.5.1960.

⁷⁰ *ibid.* no. 16, 8.6.1960; no. 17, 14.6.1960; no. 18, 16.6.1960.

⁷¹ BC 586 A2.1, Laurie Geffen to John Shingler, 18.5.1960, 18.6.1960; nd.; John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 20.5.1960.

⁷² BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 20.5.1960.

⁷³ BC 586 A2.1, Laurie Geffen to John Shingler, nd. (?) 17.5.1960.

⁷⁴ A 'liberal ticket', composed of *inter alia* Rose-Innes Phahle of the NEUM and Saul Bastomsky of the LP and the COD and Mariemootho Pillay (perhaps Marimathu Pillay, later a medical doctor and ANC MP) stood on an electoral platform demanding the total desegregation of Wits in 1959. M. Shear, *Wits: a university in the apartheid era*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 1996, pp. 30, 287.

⁷⁵ Baruch Hirson, a member of the Wits staff and aligned to the NEUM, but at that time a critical and disillusioned member of the COD, joined one of these marches. Later it was reported (incorrectly) that he had led the march. Hirson was also associated with the 'Students' Fellowship Society'. B. Hirson, *Revolutions in my life*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1995, pp. 270, 293.

⁷⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 6, 24.5.1960; *Nux* no. 4, 11.6.1960.

⁷⁷ 'Anti-Hooligan' to *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 7 no. 6, 24.5.1960.

⁷⁸ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 8, 8.6.1960; no. 9, 14.6.1960; Paul Devitt to *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 10, 21.6.1960.

the president of NUSAS.⁷⁹ Liberals, among others, were very keen to foster such student unity, but a UCT united front failed to consolidate before the lifting of the emergency. NUSAS, however, saw the need for a progressive pressure group on the campus which would further the NUSAS (and LP) agenda and thus, from behind the scenes, was instrumental in the establishment of the UCT Radical Society.⁸⁰ NUSAS and campus Liberal opinion coincided with that of the national LP. In an effort to fill the political vacuum left by the banning of the liberation movements, the LP considered establishing a new political organisation, but Luthuli was not interested.⁸¹

Sharpeville and the state of emergency led to a deterioration in relations between students and university authorities. One reason for this was that the English-medium universities were put under increased pressure from the government to eliminate the supposedly fertile political environment which allegedly nurtured Sharpeville. NUSAS feared then that prospective staff and students might in the future be subjected to state-imposed ideological screening.⁸² In May 1960, Albert Hertzog, the far-right wing Minister of Posts and Telecommunications accused the English-medium universities of 'sharpening the spears' which would 'stab' 'white South Africa in the back',⁸³ presumably a reference to Philip Kgosana at UCT and Robert Sobukwe at Wits. Though the principal of UCT angrily denounced Hertzog's accusations,⁸⁴ the UCT authorities, like those at Wits, co-operated to a degree with the government.⁸⁵ Thus, the ban on meetings at Wits was retained⁸⁶ even after the state had eased its restrictions on gatherings, while the authorities at UCT were allegedly responsible for the presence of the security police at the mass meeting called to protest the state of emergency.⁸⁷ At Pietermaritzburg, E.G. Malherbe forbade the SRC and Academic Freedom Committee to picket the university's 'Open Day' alleging that the police had threatened to arrest all protesters and that demonstrations would jeopardise his negotiations with the government regarding the release of the University of Natal detainees.⁸⁸

Other incidents at Wits and Pietermaritzburg suggest a conservative backlash, aided and abetted by government supporters and/or agents of the state pursuing their own agendas. The *Broederbond* was actively championing the creation of Afrikaans-medium/Nationalist institutions in various parts of the country. The first steps towards the establishment of an Afrikaans university on the Rand came with the announcement in 1960 that the Goudstad Teachers Training College would open its doors

⁷⁹ *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 16, 8.6.1960; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 10, 21.6.1960.

⁸⁰ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie Geffen and Hugh Lewin, 21.3.1961; A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie Geffen, 26.4.1961.

⁸¹ D. Moffat, 'From 'conscience politics' to the battlefields of political activism: the Liberal Party in Natal, 1953-1968', MA dissertation, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1999, p. 126.

⁸² *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 5, 17.5.1960.

⁸³ *Nux* no. 4, 1.6.1960; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 5, 17.5.1960.

⁸⁴ *Nux* no. 4, 1.6.1960.

⁸⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 5, 17.5.1960.

⁸⁶ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 22.6.1960.

⁸⁷ *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 18, 16.6.1960.

⁸⁸ *Nux* no. 4, 1.6.1960.

in Johannesburg in 1961.⁸⁹ The *Broederbond* continued its campaign begun in 1957 to keep Rhodes out of Port Elizabeth, while in Natal it later came to light that from a base in the Agriculture Faculty, the *Broederbond* intended transforming Pietermaritzburg and the Natal Training Colleges into Nationalist institutions. In order to justify expensive new universities, the impression had to be created - with the assistance of *agents provocateurs* - that the English universities discriminated against Afrikaners (as witnessed at Wits and Rhodes in 1957) and with their radicalism and lawlessness were hostile to Afrikaner values. Thus, the night before the proposed 'Open Day' picket was to have taken place at Pietermaritzburg, the SRC's offices were burgled, presumably to sabotage the picket. At Wits it was believed that government supporters, unable to muster sufficient support on the campus for their cause, infiltrated the 'rowdies' or the 'engineers' leading to increasing violence at student mass meetings. The 'engineers' were traditionally anti-authority and known for their disruption of meetings, but they were considered UP-orientated and anti-NP.⁹⁰

How did NUSAS view its future in the light of the state of emergency, the banning of the liberation movements, the mass detentions and Hertzog's attack on the 'open' universities? In early May, NUSAS feared that if the emergency persisted, the national union would be banned. Thus the leadership began putting in place contingency plans with regard to its files, avenues of outside communication and new campus-based structures.⁹¹ However, in the event of NUSAS avoiding proscription and the state of emergency being lifted, it was felt that in light of the changed political environment, NUSAS needed to widen its sphere of activities and move in a more radical direction. A number of options were deliberated. Firstly, it considered drawing up an open letter to Verwoerd stating in 'unequivocal terms' NUSAS's belief in a non-racial society and the role of the youth in preparing for such an entity.⁹² Secondly, NUSAS could adopt a resolution based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights calling for a 'national convention of all races and groups in South Africa to consider a way out of the present impasse'. This could 'capitalise on the vacuum caused by the lifting of the state of emergency and...serve as a means of broadening NUSAS's sphere of activity'. Thirdly, it could make new attempts at convening a multi-racial youth conference which would bring NUSAS into contact with groups on the left and the right.⁹³ By the middle of May, Shingler had decided that although NUSAS remained high on the government's shortlist, it represented no threat to it and thus would remain untouched.⁹⁴ Thus NUSAS went ahead with its three plans.

The multi-racial youth conference already planned for May 1960 had to be abandoned due to the proscription of the ANC and the detention of many of its organisers, including Wentzel.⁹⁵ This

⁸⁹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1960, p. 31.

⁹⁰ 'Open Letter to Engineers', *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 9, 14.6.1960.

⁹¹ BC 586 A2.1, Laurie Geffen to John Shingler, 5.5.1960.

⁹² *ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 18.5.1960, p. 2.

⁹⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1960, pp. 74-75.

mooted conference was controversial firstly, because it moved NUSAS into uncharted territory in hosting the event with the ANCYL and the SAIYC and secondly, because it was scheduled for 31 May 1960, the climax of the NP-inspired festival celebrating fifty years of the Union of South Africa. The Congresses boycotted this festival,⁹⁶ a series of events aimed primarily at forging white unity, while NUSAS and its SRCs, being non-political, took no stand on the matter.⁹⁷ Staging the multi-racial conference on Union Day then, also the date of a government-sponsored youth festival in Bloemfontein, would thus be construed as a deliberately defiant protest gesture and an endorsement of the boycott. NUSAS thus made it clear to the Youth Congresses that its reluctant agreement to this was based on the understanding that the date of the conference was 'coincidental' and so devoid of any political significance.⁹⁸

NUSAS did not however, remain aloof from protests against apartheid mounted on Union Day. At a conference hosted by De Blank in November 1959, representatives from a variety of organisations, including the ANC, LP, the Civil Rights League and NUSAS concluded that after fifty years of Union, South Africa was still plagued by poverty and injustice.⁹⁹ Accordingly, a 'Continuation Committee' on which NUSAS served, made arrangements for a march followed by a 'dedication ceremony' pledging participants to work for the improvement of wages, the extension of human and civil rights to all and, significantly for NUSAS, undertake to convene a new representative national convention.¹⁰⁰ On 31 May 1960 Van der Sandt Centilivres together with various dignitaries, connected to the LP and ANC led the 'dedication march' through the streets of Cape Town, eliciting much student support.¹⁰¹ Thus the ground had already been prepared for the calling of a national convention, but NUSAS realised that it faced serious obstacles from the student assembly in adopting such a policy.¹⁰²

White fears precipitated by Sharpeville drove not only a white conservative campus backlash but also a renewed white co-operation movement. This was spearheaded by the SRCs of Pietermaritzburg and Rhodes¹⁰³ as well as Hennie van der Walt, the president of both the Potchefstroom SRC and the ASB (jailed for embezzlement in 1988 after serving as Deputy Minister of Co-operation and Development¹⁰⁴). Van der Walt was so desperate to secure national student co-operation that he had accepted the customary invitation extended to the ASB-affiliated SRCs to

⁹⁶ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 25.1.1960.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*; *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 14, 25.5.1960.

⁹⁸ BC 586 T60, John Shingler to Ernie Wentzel, 17.12.1959; B3 Executive Minutes 1959, p. 28.

⁹⁹ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich, 'Report on the Archbishop's Conference held on the 28th November 1959 in the Cathedral Hall, Cape Town', nd.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1960, p. 75; T60, Moira Henderson to the 'Secretary of NUSAS', 'Continuation Committee of the Archbishop's Conference', 29.2.1960; John Shingler to the 'Secretary of the Archbishop's Conference', 10.3.1960.

¹⁰¹ *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 14, 25.5.1960; Klaus P. Klein; 'Beelzebub & Co'; John Gibbon to *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 16, 8.6.1960.

¹⁰² BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 18.5.1960, p. 2.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Die Beeld*, 3.9.1993, <http://152.111.1.88/argief/berigte/beeld/1993/09/3/1/6.html> accessed 20.9.2014; P. Laurence, 'Corruption: a fine balance of forces', Helen Suzman Foundation, <http://hsf.org.za/resource-centre/focus/issues-31-40/third-quarter-2003/corruption-a-fine-balance-of-forces> accessed 20.9.2014.

attend the annual NUSAS congress,¹⁰⁵ much to the NUSAS president's private regret. He feared that the presence of Van der Walt – a likeable character - would fuel the white co-operation movement, pushing the student assembly to the right and thus less amenable to endorsing the radical proposals to be put before it.¹⁰⁶ Ultimately a setback in the white co-operation movement resulted in Van der Walt changing his mind about attending the NUSAS congress (discussed later) and, moreover, the national convention issue was shelved until more propitious circumstances prevailed.

The 1960 NUSAS Congress and conflict between the liberal and radical left

The 1960 congress, which took place despite the state of emergency restrictions, was well-attended (though a training college delegate declined her invitation to be present because of the supposed danger entailed¹⁰⁷) and did not shirk from discussing political issues. It concerned itself with a proactive policy towards the new ethnic colleges, in particular at Fort Hare (discussed in chapter seven) and in the context of both the national and international student co-operation movement, became embroiled in long and divisive ideological conflict over contact with East European student organisations¹⁰⁸ and the ASB. Because of its hostile and unco-operative attitude towards NUSAS and its active championing of university apartheid, the majority of Wits delegates (led by Justin Joffe) unsuccessfully proposed that NUSAS cease any further attempts at contact or co-operation with the ASB.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, they refused to ratify an earlier decision of the NUSAS executive declining an invitation to participate in a Metallurgy and Geology seminar hosted by the Polish national student union.¹¹⁰

These conflicts resumed on the Wits campus after congress. In an article that a NUSAS executive member considered 'vitriolic' and anti-NUSAS,¹¹¹ Joffe, in an evaluation of the recent NUSAS congress in *Wits Student*, concluded that Wits was out of sync with NUSAS policy and predicted its further loss of power and influence in the national union.¹¹² With the active involvement of the NUSAS executive members on the Wits SRC,¹¹³ who had earlier expressed concern at the potential damage Joffe could cause at the NUSAS congress,¹¹⁴ Joffe was relieved of his position on the editorial board of *Wits Student*. Five SRC members who endorsed Joffe's views of the NUSAS congress¹¹⁵ (some of whom were members of the COD¹¹⁶) resigned in protest at the authoritarian

¹⁰⁵ *Die Wapad*, 11.5.1960.

¹⁰⁶ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 24.5.1960.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, 20.5.1960, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes, 'Report of the International Relations Commission', 'Appendix 5', pp. 93-94.

¹⁰⁹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1960, pp. 16-17; *Dome*, August 1960; *Rhodeo* vol. 14 no. 4, 26.8.1960;

Witwatersrand Student vol. 12 no. 11, 2.8.1960.

¹¹⁰ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1960, p. 51; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 11, 2.8.1960.

¹¹¹ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to Ros (Traub), 7.8.1960.

¹¹² *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 11, 2.8.1960.

¹¹³ BC 586 A2.2, Laurie Geffen to Ros (Traub) nd. ('9pm Friday Just out of Nairobi').

¹¹⁴ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 22.6.1960, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 12, 9.8.1960; no. 14, 24.8.1960; B. Blecher, S. Bastomsky, M. Wade, H Barolsky to *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 27, 28.9.1960.

actions of the SRC, as did the entire staff of both the *Wits Student*¹¹⁷ and the NUSAS Local Committee. Harking back to the Wits SRC crisis of 1955, when the Wits left was routed, a '*Wits-Student-In-Exile*' (like the 1955 Wits-SRC-in-exile) was published off-campus. With Wits awash with anonymous pamphlets implying that Joffe and his supporters were 'communistic', a rowdy mass meeting failed to pass a motion of no-confidence in the SRC. In the bye-election which followed, Joffe was returned to the SRC¹¹⁸ indicating that the Wits student body, in contrast to those at other NUSAS centres, had not lurched to the right and embraced white co-operation.

This incident also demonstrates the growing re-engagement of the radical left in campus and NUSAS politics and the seriousness with which it took the Congresses' commitment to a united front. At UCT too, the radical left played a pivotal role in the 1959/60 desegregation campaign and one of their number, Dawn Levy, had taken up the position of NUSAS regional secretary. However, believing that NUSAS should assume a direct political role and should not waste time attempting to change white students' attitudes, which included 'courting' the ASB, she resigned from NUSAS at the 1960 congress.¹¹⁹ Shortly thereafter the radical left exited UCT politics altogether even to the extent of boycotting the SRC elections.¹²⁰ Ironically, this was probably to the advantage of the liberals and the disadvantage of the right as radical candidates tended to split the vote allowing for the success of those of conservative persuasion. With the LP moving into extra-parliamentary politics and thus building a closer relationship with the ANC and the Indian Congresses in campaigns against the removal of 'Black Spots' and the Group Areas Act and women's passes,¹²¹ it inevitably had to work with the COD too, despite lingering reservations in certain sections of the LP about the COD's communist connections and entryism. NUSAS would not work with the COD except in exceptional circumstances as, for example, in making contact with the new ethnic colleges.¹²²

Prior to its 1960 congress, the NUSAS leadership had already ensured that Joffe would not be elected to the executive¹²³ and according to the radical left would brook no internal constructive criticism of policy.¹²⁴ In its arrangements for the multi-racial youth conference, NUSAS negotiated with the ANCYL and the Indian Youth Congresses and intended to invite the UP Youth too. However, nowhere in the correspondence is there any mention of the COD Youth being either a

¹¹⁶ 'Who was on the apartheid police spy list?', 7.12.2003, *IOL News* at <http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/who-was-on-the-apartheid-police-spy-list-1.11847#U61jlgQU1u>, accessed 27.6.2014.

¹¹⁷ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 14, 24.8.1960; B. Blecher, S. Bastomsky, M. Wade, H. Barolsky to *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 27, 28.9.1960.

¹¹⁸ B. Blecher, S. Bastomsky, M. Wade, H. Barolsky to *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 27, 28.9.1960.

¹¹⁹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 11, 2.8.1960; B. Blecher, S. Bastomsky, M. Wade, H. Barolsky to *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 27, 28.9.1960.

¹²⁰ 'With cap and gown: campus conservatism booms', *Contact*, 13.7.1961, p. 2.

¹²¹ D. Moffat, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-87.

¹²² Saul Bastomsky from the Wits branch of the COD was to be approached to make contacts at the new University College of the North. BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 19.2.1960.

¹²³ BC 586 A2.1, Laurie (Geffen) to John (Shingler), 4.6.1960; John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 13.6.1960, p. 5.

¹²⁴ B. Blecher, S. Bastomsky, M. Wade, H. Barolsky to *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 27, 28.9.1960.

party to the arrangements or even being invited to the conference¹²⁵ even though a non-racial COD branch operated at Wits.¹²⁶ This indicates not only NUSAS's desperate attempts to distance itself from any association with 'communists' in the face of NP smears, but also the personal ideological prejudices of key NUSAS individuals at the time. Wentzel, one of the organisers of the multi-racial conference, was generally suspicious of COD infiltration. He had, while being in NUSAS, played a prominent role in ousting the radical left in 1955, and as Transvaal head of the student section of the LP, resisted the COD plan to amalgamate its reading groups with the LP.¹²⁷ The announcement, shortly after Sharpeville, by the South African Communist Party (SACP) of its existence – it was reconstituted in 1953¹²⁸ - almost certainly increased the suspicion of LP members that the COD was a communist front, a suspicion enunciated the following year by the 1961 NUSAS president, Adrian Leftwich. Regarding the radical Wits position on the ASB, NUSAS office bearers probably supported it, but publicly had to distance themselves from it. Firstly, it was propagated by the COD and secondly and more importantly, as the NUSAS president was to argue privately the following year, calls to sever ties with the ASB only served to fuel the white co-operation movement which NUSAS was desperately attempting to stymie.¹²⁹

Sharpeville and white co-operation

Calls for white student unity stemmed directly from white fears following both Sharpeville and MacMillan's 'Wind of change' speech. Whites looked north of the border and watched in horrified foreboding the escalating civil war in the Belgian Congo and the fate of the white minority fleeing on the eve of independence. Moreover, a further ten African colonies were due to gain their independence in 1960 at a time when Pan-Africanism was becoming more assertive and its leading champion, Kwame Nkrumah, openly backing South Africa's liberation movements and the economic boycott. In addition, the United Nations Security Council, including the United States, condemned apartheid and the government's response to Sharpeville, making white South Africans feel even more isolated.

Speakers at the SABRA conference in April 1960 argued that an indigenous white Afrikaner nation had the right to exist on the African continent, but in the face of a black revolution faced its most dangerous hour yet and, were it not rapidly to make the tremendous sacrifices necessary to make the Bantustans work, white Western civilisation faced extinction in South Africa.¹³⁰ Talks needed to

¹²⁵ One letter mentions the fact that there would be 'few or no Reds' at the conference. BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 25.1.1960, p. 4.

¹²⁶ B. Hirson, *op. cit.*, pp. 265, 278.

¹²⁷ E. Wentzel, 'Memoirs', A 1931, E.M. Wentzel Papers, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, pp. 4, 5.

¹²⁸ G. Houston, 'The post-Rivonia ANC/SACP underground', South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 1, 1960-1970*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004, p. 621.

¹²⁹ BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie Geffen, 26.4.1961.

¹³⁰ *Die Matie*, 5.5.1960.

be initiated with 'responsible Bantu' and whites were urged to stand together and not fight one another.¹³¹ Similar sentiments were voiced in the Afrikaans student press and within the ASB.¹³²

Dissent within the NP regarding Verwoerd's application of apartheid escalated after Sharpeville and played itself out in the Afrikaans student arena, colouring the white co-operation student movement. Taking advantage of Verwoerd's absence from government while he recovered from his assassination attempt, Paul Sauer, with the backing of much of the Cape NP as well as many NP intellectuals, called for a review of apartheid policies, particularly those relating to the pass laws, urban Africans and African wages.¹³³ L.J. du Plessis, the Potchefstroom-based dissident expelled from the NP in 1959, raised similar concerns to those of Sauer, and in addition pleaded for the 'intensive modernisation' and 'planned democratisation' of the reserves.¹³⁴ Moreover, serious concerns were raised about apartheid and the coloured population. Many within the Cape NP and SABRA believed that coloured people were intrinsically part of the white Afrikaans population and should thus be accorded political and social rights.

The Afrikaans churches too were uneasy about the morality of certain aspects of apartheid and were concerned at the impending international isolation of their churches. Leading from this, the Dutch Reformed and *Hervormde* Churches participated in the World Council of Churches' Cottesloe Consultation in December 1960 and were signatories to a statement which could be interpreted as condemning as unchristian various aspects of apartheid such as migrant labour and the Mixed Marriages Act.¹³⁵

NP circles were awash with dissident literature. *Delayed Action* written by Albert Geysler and Beyers Naudé, signatories to the Cottesloe Consultation, appeared in late 1960.¹³⁶ Although he remained silent about Sharpeville,¹³⁷ N.P. van Wyk Louw's earlier ideas on 'liberal nationalism',¹³⁸ 'survival in justice'¹³⁹ and 'loyal resistance' were revisited and offered as serious critiques of Verwoerdism. An anonymous publication, *Pro Libertate*¹⁴⁰ appeared on the Stellenbosch campus which mentioned

¹³¹ *Rand Daily Mail*, 21.4.1960; 23.4.1960.

¹³² Manie van der Spuy to *Die Matie*, 8.4.1960.

¹³³ D. O' Meara, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

¹³⁴ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: biography of a people*, Tafelberg and University of Virginia Press, Cape Town and Charlottesville, 2004, p. 523.

¹³⁵ J. Kinghorn, 'Modernisation and apartheid, the Afrikaner churches', R. Elphick and R. Davenport (eds), *Christianity in South Africa, a political, social and cultural history*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1997, pp. 148-149; P. Walshe, *Church versus state in South Africa: the case of the Christian Institute*, C. Hurst and Co, London, 1993, pp. 14, 18.

¹³⁶ I. Wilkins and H. Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaners: inside the Afrikaner Broederbond*, Jonathan Ball, Braamfontein, 1980, p. 295.

¹³⁷ 'The case of NP van Wyk Louw: critical Afrikaner intellectuals and apartheid, 1943 – 1958', http://newhistory.co.za/4_the-case-of-n-p-van-wyk-louw/ accessed 2.2.2012.

¹³⁸ Published in 1958. H. Giliomee, 'Apartheid, verligtheid, and liberalism', J. Butler, R. Elphick and D. Welsh (eds), *Democratic liberalism in South Africa, its history and prospect*, Wesleyan University Press and David Philip, Middletown and Cape Town, 1987, p. 368.

¹³⁹ 'The case of NP van Wyk Louw', *op. cit.*

¹⁴⁰ Beyers Naude, by 1961, a NP dissident, had founded a newspaper, *Pro Libertate* while a student at Stellenbosch in the 1930s. Peter Walshe, *op. cit.*, p. 26. *Pro Libertate* had been a 'covert and audacious' student magazine at Stellenbosch in

Louw's *Lojale Verset* and raised many of the concerns of NP dissidents.¹⁴¹ This infuriated the insipidly authoritarian Stellenbosch SRC,¹⁴² which like Verwoerd, the *Broederbond* and the 1961 ASB congress, was intent on stamping out what it termed 'liberalism' and the type of white co-operation that it linked to this liberalism. White co-operation was on the mind of many white South Africans after Sharpeville. Many within the NP and the UP called for a coalition government.¹⁴³

In 1960, a new political movement, the National Union (NU) was established by Japie Basson, expelled from the NP in 1959 for his rejection of the Bantu Self Government Act. Basson shared many of the concerns of the SABRA visionaries, such as N.J. Olivier (recently replaced as chairperson of SABRA by Verwoerd loyalists), who helped draft National Union policy. Thus Basson advocated direct coloured group representation in parliament and the economic development and geographical consolidation of the reserves and their incorporation as autonomous entities into a South African federation. He believed further that South Africa should strive towards an 'open society' rather than one based on either forced separation or forced integration.¹⁴⁴ These views echoed those of retired chief justice and former Fusion Minister of Native Affairs, Henry Fagan, who in his recently published book, *Our responsibility* pleaded for a sense of community between black and white and inter-racial contact regulated by (conservative) social convention rather than legislation.¹⁴⁵ Fagan subsequently accepted the leadership of the NU. With the movement's moderate race policy (perhaps to the left of 1959 UP policy) and its accent on white unity (Basson proposed to replace an Afrikaner-dominated government with one composed of both white language groups), the NU hoped to attract the support of English- and Afrikaans-speaking whites in both the UP and NP.¹⁴⁶ The NU generated much nationwide excitement. It won the support of NP dissidents such as theologian Albert Geyser and young Afrikaans-speakers in the 'Pretoria Study Group', former UP supporters and even the defection of large sections of current UP branches, as well as unilingual English-speakers like Brian Bamford, later a PP MP.¹⁴⁷

The white student co-operation movement occurred against the background of the Sharpeville aftermath and the rise of the NU. In May 1960, the chairperson of the Pietermaritzburg SRC, John Chettle (later to work for the conservative South African Foundation in New York) invited the

the 1930s. It 'challenged some of the less sacred but nevertheless stultifying aspects of Afrikaner culture and politics manifest on the campus'. B. Burnell, 'The life of Beyers Naude: a psychobiographical study', PhD thesis, University of the Free State, 2013. According to an editorial in *Die Matie*, the authors of the new publication were deliberately using the title, *Pro Libertate* to legitimate their new ideas and create the impression that these were a natural progression from the ideas of the 1930s.

¹⁴¹ A.A. Visser to *Die Matie*, 23.6.1961.

¹⁴² *Die Matie*, 11.8.1961.

¹⁴³ *Rand Daily Mail*, 7.4.1960.

¹⁴⁴ J. Basson, *Steeds op die parlementere kolfblad: met insigte oor die Afrikaner en Afrikaans*, Politika, Cape Town, 2008, pp. 4-6, 11.

¹⁴⁵ '3. Critical Afrikaner intellectuals and apartheid 1948-1958', www.newhistory.co.za/3-critical-afrikaner-intellectuals-and-apartheid-1948-1958/ accessed 2.2.2012.

¹⁴⁶ J. Basson, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6, 18-19; J.C. Gordon Brown, 'South Africa: rustle on the veld' *Time*, 29.2.1960, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,873235,00.html> accessed 28.9.2011.

¹⁴⁷ J. Basson, *op. cit.*, pp. 5, 12-13, 16-17, 20-24.

presidents and vice-presidents of all South African university SRCs to a conference to discuss firstly, NUSAS-ASB relations, secondly, the position of the new university colleges and thirdly, future contact between the various student groups.¹⁴⁸ Pietermaritzburg was motivated by 'deep concern' 'over the riots' and the 'general state of affairs pertaining in South Africa'¹⁴⁹ and the urgent necessity for 'mutual understanding'.¹⁵⁰ The bilingual conference would be held *in camera* under the chairmanship of Henry Fagan.¹⁵¹ Simultaneously, the Potchefstroom SRC called a white inter-SRC conference along the lines of the non-political Committee of University Principals to discuss practical student interests.¹⁵² After Sharpeville, speaker after speaker on the Potchefstroom campus and within the ASB stressed the dire situation in which Afrikaners found themselves and, pleading the cause of white co-operation, argued that what was the fate of Afrikaans-speaking whites was also the fate of English-speakers.¹⁵³ Indicating the level of fear felt by some Potchefstroom student leaders during the Sharpeville crisis was the remarkable appeal for the 'two great giants of the student world', the ASB and NUSAS to 'take hands' as time was running out: '...the time for quibbling and fanatical heresy was over'.¹⁵⁴ Potchefstroom believed that despite serious differences between the two organisations, enough areas of common interest existed for the two to work together.¹⁵⁵ Perhaps this was not the view of everyone at Potchefstroom but certainly there existed a desire for some kind of change. A significant number of Potchefstroom students followed L.J. du Plessis into the NU.¹⁵⁶

However, the main drive for white co-operation came from the ASB president, Hennie van der Walt, based at Potchefstroom. So as to broaden its membership at non-ASB-affiliated centres and establish itself at the English-medium universities, the ASB amended its constitution to allow student groupings such as the Wits *Afrikaanse Studenteklub* and similar organisations it intended to set-up at Pietermaritzburg and Natal Training College, to join the ASB.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, some elements within the ASB called for a united white front and pleaded with those who had few reasons to disagree with the ASB to throw in their lot with an organisation they claimed was both truly national and patriotic.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, the ASB believed, like NUSAS, that university apartheid would seriously dilute the non-racial principles of the former open universities, making English-speaking students more accepting of apartheid and so weakening NUSAS. With few black students in the national union, the ASB hoped that students at the new ethnic colleges would realise that NUSAS was culturally alienating to them

¹⁴⁸ *Rhodeo* vol. 14 no. 3, 24.6.1960; *Die Wapad*, 11.5.1960.

¹⁴⁹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 12, 9.8.1960.

¹⁵⁰ *Die Wapad*, 11.5.1960.

¹⁵¹ *Rhodeo* vol. 14 no. 3, 24.6.1960; *Die Wapad*, 11.5.1960.

¹⁵² *Die Wapad*, 27.4.1960.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, 13.4.1960; 27.4.1960.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 13.4.1960.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 23.5.1960.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 13.4.1960. With a base in the Agricultural Faculty at UN.P, the *Broederbond* planned to transform Pietermaritzburg and the Natal Training College into NP institutions. See later.

¹⁵⁸ *Die Wapad*, 27.4.1960.

and would thus be amenable to an apartheid confederation.¹⁵⁹ The Potchefstroom SRC believed that the 'Bantu' had a great belief in the justice of the Afrikaner and apartheid.¹⁶⁰ Nonetheless, it did not invite the ethnic colleges to its inter-SRC conference apparently because there was no suitable accommodation for black delegates in Potchefstroom.¹⁶¹

In the end Potchefstroom withdrew its invitation in favour of Pietermaritzburg's more inclusive one.¹⁶² The Natal invitation drew a storm of protest from the UCT SRC because it effectively restricted the open universities to sending white delegates only and to avoid all social mixing, it proposed that meals be served at the conference table.¹⁶³ The radicals such as Tickin believed that the gathering would serve no useful purpose and recommended that the invitation be ignored. However, the views of those desiring white co-operation prevailed and thus UCT replied that it welcomed the initiative but not on Pietermaritzburg's terms. The Wits SRC narrowly voted to attend the conference as they were informed that the NUSAS president supported the idea and so assumed that UCT did too. This decision was overturned through the efforts of the NUSAS vice-president¹⁶⁴ and ultimately both Wits and UCT indicated that they were not prepared to attend an event where the restrictions on representation were aimed at circumventing their stated policies.¹⁶⁵

Pietermaritzburg postponed its conference to a later date, much to the relief of Shingler. Shortly after Sharpeville, Shingler had privately indicated his support for the initiative to the conference organisers, but subsequently came to the same conclusion as other executive members that it was wrong and potentially dangerous, particularly after the rector of the University of the North had shown so much enthusiasm. Subsequently, Shingler publicly made it known that while NUSAS welcomed any attempts at co-operation, these were really the concerns of SRCs rather than NUSAS. The NUSAS executive thus hoped that the Pietermaritzburg gathering would be postponed until after the NUSAS July congress at which SRCs would be subtly turned against it.¹⁶⁶

Van der Walt and the Potchefstroom SRC were furious at the cancellation of the conference.¹⁶⁷ The open universities were accused of destroying student co-operation because even when the Afrikaans-medium universities conceded, in their opinion, ninety percent of their principles, Wits and UCT still refused to co-operate.¹⁶⁸ Because of this, the SRC decided that in future the Afrikaans

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 11.5.1960.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 13.4.1960.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*, 27.4.1960.

¹⁶² *ibid.*, 11.5.1960.

¹⁶³ *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 13, 18.5.1960; *Rhodeo* vol. 14 no. 3, 24.6.1960.

¹⁶⁴ BC 586 A2.1, Laurie Geffen to John Shingler, 5.5.1960, p. 8.

¹⁶⁵ *Rhodeo* vol. 14 no. 3, 24.6.1960.

¹⁶⁶ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 20.5.1960.

¹⁶⁷ *Die Wapad*, 15.6.1960.

¹⁶⁸ *Die Matie*, 5.8.1960.

universities would not initiate co-operation in this type of forum and in protest, decided to rescind its earlier decision to attend the NUSAS congress.¹⁶⁹

The Pietermaritzburg conference or the 'National Convention of SRC's' finally met shortly after the conclusion of the NUSAS congress. It was hailed very inaccurately by the excited Natal press as the first meeting of English- and Afrikaans-speaking students since 1933.¹⁷⁰ It was attended by representatives of all of NUSAS's white affiliates as well as those of UNNE and Fort Hare.¹⁷¹ The presence of the traditionally ultra-rigid Pretoria SRC and the Verwoerdian *Ruiterweg*-controlled Stellenbosch SRC is indicative of the fearful climate of the times and/or the ulterior motives of the ASB – the latter contemplating a 'three bond confederation policy' based on separate ethnic and linguistic representation for black and white students. The convention took place behind closed doors and while a final press statement was released, the minutes were available only to those who attended and not to NUSAS. The participants agreed that a similar annual meeting should be inaugurated without restrictions on representation, that attacks by the ASB and NUSAS on each other should be minimised and, importantly for the ASB and the Afrikaans-medium centres, no 'irresponsible' attacks on South Africa would be made abroad by either the ASB or NUSAS. With evident relief, Shingler reasoned the conference had not been too damaging to NUSAS in that firstly, no secretariat had emerged, desired by the ASB for its apartheid confederation and secondly, NUSAS had not been attacked directly but only implicitly.¹⁷² A follow-up conference was called for August 1961 by enthusiastic co-operationists at Rhodes, some of whom were opposed to NUSAS. NUSAS resolved to ensure that there would be no restrictions on representation, perhaps in an effort to stymy it. In early 1961, Rhodes and Pietermaritzburg were joined by Durban in the pursuit of national student co-operation.

In late 1960, the conservative backlash following Sharpeville manifested itself in the return of more conservative SRCs at most of the NUSAS centres.¹⁷³ At Pietermaritzburg NUSAS watched with an element of foreboding as Agriculture student, Ivor Dreosti,¹⁷⁴ a keen supporter of the NU¹⁷⁵ and filled with an almost messianic vision to achieve national co-operation (including between white and black), assumed the presidency of the SRC. He had the backing of a large cohort of rowdy, heavy drinking, racially paternalistic,¹⁷⁶ 'anti-political' (meaning anti-left wing), though generally anti-NP

¹⁶⁹ *Die Wapad*, 15.6.1960.

¹⁷⁰ M. Cutten, 'Natal University and the question of autonomy, 1959-1962', BA (Honours) dissertation, University of Natal, Durban, 1987, p. 27.

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, *Contact*, 13.8.1960.

¹⁷² BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Adrian (Leftwich) and Hugh (Lewin), 23.8.1960.

¹⁷³ BC 586 B1, Adrian Leftwich to Alan Paton, 24.5.1961. For example, sportsmen and an 'outright Nationalist' won seats on the UCT SRC. A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Hugh Lewin, 16.3.1961; 'With cap and gown: campus conservatism booms', *Contact*, 13.7.1961.

¹⁷⁴ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to 'Hoek' (Adrian Leftwich), 4.1.1960 [sic] 1961.

¹⁷⁵ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to Adrian Leftwich, 11.6.1961.

¹⁷⁶ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to 'Hoek' (Adrian Leftwich), 4.1.1960 [sic] 1961.

agricultural students ('agrics') newly organised into an Agricultural Students Council.¹⁷⁷ Hugh Lewin, the NUSAS vice-president based at Pietermaritzburg was tasked with building up a liberal clique to countenance the agrics,¹⁷⁸ isolate Dreosti from his conservative student base and educate him on the implicit dangers of sacrificing principles, which inevitably occurred with white co-operation.¹⁷⁹

Already in September 1960, student circles were awash with rumours regarding Durban's possible disaffiliation from NUSAS.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, the brief interlude of a group of progressive, if not radical, pro-NUSAS student leaders at Durban came to an end in late 1960. Topping the SRC polls from a field of candidates which the *Sunday Times* alleged included fervent government supporters¹⁸¹ were the conservative, Pieter Janisch, trying to distance himself from his SACP uncle, Bram Fischer,¹⁸² Dudley Goodhead, a Natal separatist¹⁸³ and David Gordon.¹⁸⁴ The charismatic Gordon, the son of Professor Ian Gordon of the Natal Medical School, was the ostensibly loyal chairperson of the Durban Local NUSAS Committee but was earlier described as 'an engineer of the engineers' (meaning that he was politically conservative) and leader of the anti-progressive, anti-NUSAS opposition at Durban.¹⁸⁵ Gordon won SRC office on the basis of his intention of establishing a separate Natal Students' Association,¹⁸⁶ a plan he was evidently able to further during the campaign preceding the republican referendum called by Verwoerd for October 1960.

Because the majority of South Africans were excluded from participating in the referendum, a republic was rejected by the liberation movements, the LP, PP and the UP. This referendum aroused strong emotions in English-speaking Natal, not least amongst Natal students who feared that severing the umbilical cord with Britain would make them even more hostage to the vagaries of Afrikaner nationalism. During the course of the referendum campaign, the NP *Jeugbond* trampled and spat on the Union Jack while declaring Durban's South Beach an independent republic, fueling much anti-republican feeling.¹⁸⁷ A number of Durban students, including Brian Sharpe, a NUSAS executive member, established an Anti-Republican Youth Front, which at its huge outdoor rallies, called for 'an independent Natal under the Queen of South Africa.'¹⁸⁸ Gordon and Goodhead attempted to organise an anti-republican march in October 1960,¹⁸⁹ Gordon justifying this by

¹⁷⁷ B. Guest, *A fine band of farmers are we! A history of Agricultural Studies in Pietermaritzburg, 1934-2009*, Natal Society Foundation, Pietermaritzburg, 2010, pp. 53, 55, <http://www.natalia.org.za?Files?Publications?WR%20Guest%20Are%20We%2010%20complete%20with%20cover.pdf> accessed 6.9.2014.

¹⁷⁸ BC 586 A2.1, 'Left' (Adrian Leftwich) to Hugh Lewin, 6.1.1961; Hugh Lewin to Adrian Leftwich, 15.2.1961.

¹⁷⁹ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to 'Hoek' (Adrian Leftwich), 4.1.1960 [sic] 1961.

¹⁸⁰ BC 586 A2.2, 'LG' (Laurie Geffen) to John (Shingler) and Adrian (Leftwich), 30.9.1960.

¹⁸¹ BC 586 B1, D. Gordon, 'Report of the University of Natal (Durban) Students Representative Council', 1961.

¹⁸² BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to Adrian Leftwich, 26.2.1961; Adrian Leftwich to Hugh Lewin, 3.3.1961, p. 2.

¹⁸³ BC 586 B1, D. Gordon, 'Report of the University of Natal (Durban) Students Representative Council', 1961.

¹⁸⁴ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to Adrian Leftwich, 26.2.1961; Adrian Leftwich to Hugh Lewin, 3.3.1961, p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ BC 586 O3.1, Trevor Coombe to Neville Rubin, Magnus Gunther and Roslyn Traub, 21.9.1958.

¹⁸⁶ *Dome Manifesto Edition*, August 1960.

¹⁸⁷ W.J. Stewart, 'Natal and the republican referendum', MA dissertation, University of Natal, 1990, p. 74.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 160.

¹⁸⁹ *Dome*, October 1960; Michael N. Andrew to *Dome*, October 1960; M. Cutten, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

denouncing the government for trampling on academic freedom, slandering NUSAS as communistic and importantly for future developments, dividing university students by language.¹⁹⁰

The white South African (and South West African) electorate narrowly endorsed a republic, though not in Natal where this was overwhelmingly rejected. The Durban SRC consequently called for provincial self-government for Natal.¹⁹¹ This echoed the demand of the UP-controlled Natal Provincial Council,¹⁹² the openly secessionist UFP and the Anti-Republican Youth Front and Douglas Mitchell, the Natal UP leader who vaguely but insistently asserted that the province would follow its own path should the republicans triumph.¹⁹³ With the collapse of this 'Natal Stand', precipitated by Mitchell reneging on his undertaking to lead it, Gordon appeared to abandon his separatist tendencies and became a champion, like the UP and the NU, of white national co-operation instead. The UP's campaign against a republic had originally been founded on a defence of white unity. It believed that in the face of the anti-whiteism displayed at Sharpeville and in the Congo, white unity was essential and thus calls for a republic were divisive and reckless.¹⁹⁴ Shortly after the inauguration of the Republic in May 1961, Verwoerd called a general election for October 1961 partly in an attempt to annihilate all opposition to his policy both from within and without the NP.¹⁹⁵ The NU and the UP constructed an electoral alliance, the former eventually merging with the latter.¹⁹⁶ All of this had repercussions for NUSAS.

During a student body meeting at Durban in April 1961, addressed by the new NUSAS president, Adrian Leftwich, Gordon alleged that the national union's approach to national problems was negative. He demanded that 'an all-out attempt be made to compromise with the Afrikaans-medium universities' outside the confines of both the ASB and NUSAS.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, Durban rejected much of NUSAS's foreign policy, which by 1961 had moved further to the left than that of NUS and was aligned with the Afro-Asian bloc in the non-communist ISC.¹⁹⁸ Thus the Durban SRC dissociated itself from any denunciations of European and American imperialism in Africa, Asia and South America¹⁹⁹ and labeled itself 'anti-communist' in contra-distinction to the 'non-communist' NUSAS.²⁰⁰ Moreover, while retaining as policy Durban's opposition to university apartheid, the SRC abolished its Academic Freedom Committee.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁰ M. Cutten, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

¹⁹¹ BC 586 B1, D. Gordon, 'Report of the University of Natal (Durban) Students Representative Council', 1961; Michael N. Andrew to *Dome*, October 1960.

¹⁹² P.S. Thompson, *Natalians first: separatism in South Africa 1909- 1961*, Southern, Bergville, 1990, pp.171-172.

¹⁹³ W.J. Stewart, *op. cit.*, pp. 85, 133, 160-164.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 73, 78.

¹⁹⁵ D. O' Meara, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

¹⁹⁶ J. Basson, *op. cit.*, pp. 33, 57.

¹⁹⁷ *Dome*, April 1961.

¹⁹⁸ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Derek Bostock, 15.8.1962.

¹⁹⁹ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 27.4.1961, p. 4.

²⁰⁰ *Dome*, April 1961; 17.8.1961.

²⁰¹ BC 586 B1, D. Gordon, 'Report of the University of Natal (Durban) Students Representative Council', 1961, p. 3.

At the Natal Regional Conference in May 1961, attended also by the UOFS,²⁰² it was quite clear that NUSAS was out of favour and that Gordon, in alliance with Dreosti of Pietermaritzburg, planned to launch a confederation above NUSAS and the ASB²⁰³ which would, it appeared, be aligned to the NU.²⁰⁴ Shortly after the Republican celebrations, Gordon unveiled the framework for his Federal Secretariat (FEDSEC). To resolve the perennial problem of representation, separate black delegates would represent black students at Wits and UCT.²⁰⁵ This mirrored both the NU's proposal for coloured parliamentary participation as well as Van der Walt's solution to the 'open' universities' representation in the ASB's future confederation,²⁰⁶ the latter similarity not missed by the Wits student press.²⁰⁷ The NUSAS president regarded the FEDSEC proposal as a 'blasphemy'²⁰⁸ and the most dangerous ever put forward. He feared that it could win the support of many of the NUSAS and ASB universities and isolate Wits, UCT and the newly re-affiliated UNNE within NUSAS.²⁰⁹ NUSAS believed that plans had already been laid to engineer Pietermaritzburg's disaffiliation from NUSAS or failing this, ensuring the election of an anti-NUSAS SRC for 1961-2.²¹⁰

At its annual congress NUSAS planned to sabotage FEDSEC by subtly convincing white co-operation centres such as Rhodes to attack the recently launched organisation.²¹¹ This would hopefully have the effect of isolating Gordon, putting Dreosti uncomfortably out on a limb and in so doing, drawing Pietermaritzburg back into the NUSAS fold.²¹² In addition, NUSAS planned to rely on the newly (re)affiliated black centres of UNNE, Johannesburg Institution of Indian Teacher Training (JIITT) and SACHED to continue to push NUSAS policy in a progressive direction which in turn would also isolate the conservative centres.²¹³ However, isolating the conservative centres and stymying the white co-operation movement could seriously backfire were the radical black centres successfully to move that congress break off all ties with the ASB,²¹⁴ which in the event UNNE attempted. Moreover, NUSAS wondered how long it could continue to support publicly the white co-operation movement while at the same time working behind the scenes to sabotage it.²¹⁵

At the NUSAS congress in July 1961, Durban played a confused role. Perhaps caught up in the emotional response to Alan Paton's opening speech, Gordon praised NUSAS to the skies as the last

²⁰² *Dome*, May 1961.

²⁰³ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to Adrian Leftwich, 9.5.1961, p. 5; Adrian Leftwich to Laurie (Geffen) and Hugh (Lewin), 12.5.1961; Hugh (Lewin) to 'Hoek' (Adrian Leftwich), 18.5.1961.

²⁰⁴ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to Adrian Leftwich, 11.6.1961.

²⁰⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 13 no. 10, 23.6.1961.

²⁰⁶ *Die Wapad*, 18.10.1960.

²⁰⁷ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 13 no. 10, 23.6.1961.

²⁰⁸ BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie Geffen, 7.6.1961.

²⁰⁹ *ibid.*, 23.5.1961.

²¹⁰ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to Adrian Leftwich, 11.6.1961.

²¹¹ BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie Geffen, 7.6.1961; 30.6.1961.

²¹² BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie (Geffen) and Hugh (Lewin), 12.5.1961; Adrian Leftwich to Laurie (Geffen), 'Martin' (?) and Hugh (Lewin), 19.6.1961.

²¹³ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Hugh Lewin, 22.5.1961.

²¹⁴ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Hugh Lewin, 26.4.1961; A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie Geffen, 26.4.1962.

²¹⁵ BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie (Geffen), 26.4.1961.

bastion of racial tolerance.²¹⁶ He claimed that Durban would not leave the national union, but on the other hand he jubilantly relished his centre's break with NUSAS policy²¹⁷ which he believed would destroy the organisation's 'united front'. Durban refused to discuss FEDSEC²¹⁸ and walked out when the congress demanded that segregation at the University of Natal be discussed.²¹⁹ This served to drive a wedge between Durban and Pietermaritzburg, the latter siding with UNNE in accusing Durban of racism and supporting segregation.²²⁰ In the event, the congress worked its magic on the Durban delegation who all, with the exception of Gordon, underwent a conversion to NUSAS values. Consequently Gordon became isolated and a laughing stock on the SRC,²²¹ presumably as he had lost all credibility because of his numerous changes of policy.²²² In August 1961, both the Durban SRC and student body reaffirmed their affiliation to and complete confidence in NUSAS. As importantly they declared their opposition to apartheid by adopting the updated post-Sharpeville NUSAS resolution based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights²²³ which they had earlier rejected as being outside the sphere of education.²²⁴

For the time-being, the essentially white reconciliation movement was over except at the Johannesburg College of Education (JCE). At JCE a few students, including SRC members, resigned from NUSAS to pursue English-Afrikaans co-operation.²²⁵ They believed that were the English- and Afrikaans-medium training colleges to resign *en masse* from NUSAS and the ASB respectively, they could all come together in the *Transvaalse Onderwyskolleges Studenteunie* (TOKSU) which they aimed to transform from a largely administrative body into a fully-fledged student union. This was repudiated by TOKSU and most of the JCE SRC, but the SRC remained critical of Wits' stance regarding national inter-SRC conferences. It regarded Wits' refusal to compromise with the ASB centres as unrealistic and placing unnecessary obstacles in the path to reconciliation. There had been no black students on the Wits SRC since 1959, and, JCE reasoned, it was unlikely that there would be any in the future either.²²⁶ The fears of the NUSAS president that university apartheid would dilute non-racial principles were being realised.

While working towards destroying the white co-operation movement, NUSAS began implementing the plans it had mapped out after Sharpeville, namely, of radicalising the national union. It thus fell in with the national convention movement.

²¹⁶ *Dome*, 17.8.1961.

²¹⁷ BC 586 B1, D. Gordon, 'Report of the University of Natal (Durban) Student Representative Council', 1961, p. 5.

²¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 4.

²¹⁹ *Contact*, 13.7.1961.

²²⁰ *Dome*, 17.8.1961.

²²¹ Editorial in *Dome*, 17.8.1961.

²²² *ibid.*

²²³ *Dome*, 17.8.1961; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 13 no. 14, 25.8.1961; no. 16, 15.9.1961; Rory Short via email, 4.10.2014.

²²⁴ BC 586 B1, D. Gordon, 'Report of the University of Natal (Durban) Student Representative Council', 1961, p. 4.

²²⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1961, p. 9; B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 11.5.1962.

²²⁶ BC 586 B1, Ben van Bruggen, 'Report to the NUSAS Assembly, July 1962, covering the period August 1961 – June 1962', 1962, pp. 8-9.

A national convention and the anti-Republican stay-away

Shortly after the white republican referendum, a national consultation of African bodies took place in Orlando. Flowing from this was the ANC-dominated All-In African Convention held in Pietermaritzburg in March 1961. The gathering called on Verwoerd to convene a representative convention to draw up a new constitution for South Africa, failing which a three day stay-away coinciding with the declaration of the Republic would be called.²²⁷ Although in principle NUSAS supported the call for a national convention, it probably did not support the All-In venture because, like the LP which did reluctantly have Liberal African participants, it appeared to be a Congress Alliance and specifically COD front despite, confusingly, displaying the trappings of Africanism.²²⁸ However, the newly re-affiliated UNNE SRC sent observers to the meeting, a move which NUSAS supported because it felt that it was important to keep in close co-operation with all political movements.²²⁹

More to NUSAS's liking was the widely representative Natal Convention spawned by the Natal anti-Republican movement and the Natal LP which met at UNP in April 1961.²³⁰ It was attended by representatives and observers from both the UNP²³¹ and UND SRCs but because it was not a 'Natal Stand of the old type' in that it called for the abolition of segregation and the introduction of a non-racial franchise,²³² it did not find favour with Gordon and his Durban SRC observers.²³³ Not finding favour with the radical NUSAS leadership, though probably viewed with approval by much of NUSAS's student base because it posed no real threat to white interests, was the gradualist PP-UP-NU-orientated 'National Consultation' which coalesced on the Rand in June 1961.²³⁴ It was endorsed by capitalists and pillars of society such as Justices Fagan and Centilivres and Dr Duminy of UCT.²³⁵ In the Western Cape a Coloured Convention Movement closely aligned to the Congresses, but inclusive of other ideological strands, also emerged.²³⁶

Thus a national convention meant different things to different people and had wide appeal on which NUSAS could capitalise. The NUSAS leadership believed that by successfully coupling the demand for a national convention to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the national union would create the space required for more overt political action and co-operation with the democratic movement. However, the convention motion would have to be carefully phrased so as to win the

²²⁷ T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, Ravan, Braamfontein, 1985, pp. 231-232; N. Mandela, *Long walk to freedom: the autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, Macdonald Purnell, Randburg, 1995, pp. 245-246.

²²⁸ R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-140, 142.

²²⁹ BC 586 M4.1, Adrian Leftwich to D.S. Rajah, 17.3.1961; *New Age*, 25.5.1961.

²³⁰ R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, p. 147; D. Moffat, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-129.

²³¹ BC 586 T60, Natal Convention Committee, Pietermaritzburg, 'Proceedings of the Natal Convention held in the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg on 17th and 19th April 1961'.

²³² R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

²³³ BC 586 B1, D. Gordon, 'Report of the University of Natal (Durban) Student Representative Council', 1961, p. 3.

²³⁴ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Hugh Lewin, 14.6.1961.

²³⁵ R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

²³⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 146-148.

support of the more conservative centres like Rhodes, Pietermaritzburg and particularly Durban and would have to emerge initially from the affiliated campuses.²³⁷ This proved easier than NUSAS had anticipated. As already discussed with regard to Durban, in the run-up to the declaration of the Republic and South Africa's exit from the Commonwealth, emotions were running high among many English-speaking whites. In the opinion of the NUSAS president, the student population reversed out of its post-Sharpeville conservatism in the wake of the anti-Republican and national convention movement.²³⁸ Moreover, in the aftermath of Sharpeville and with the exception of Durban, NUSAS had been instrumental in establishing pressure groups (such as the Radical Society at UCT and the Human Rights Society at Wits) on all its campuses to press issues important to NUSAS such as human rights and the national convention.²³⁹

The NUSAS postal motion on the national convention emerged from those passed by its affiliated SRCs and student bodies, in particular UCT. The NUSAS president, based in Cape Town secretly drafted much of the UCT resolution and did a great deal of work behind the scenes to assure its successful passage.²⁴⁰ This resolution, proposed jointly by members of the Radical Society and the Congress Alliance (the latter proposer dubbed 'commie' by the NUSAS president)²⁴¹ was passed overwhelmingly. It stated that a democratic education could not exist in an undemocratic society, that a democratic government and education system should be based on both the recognition of human rights and the consent of the governed and thus called for a national convention to discuss the formation of a democratic South African government.²⁴²

Wits adopted an approach of multi-inclusivity in the run-up to its adoption of the UCT/NUSAS national convention resolution, which presumably to incorporate as many people as possible, it referred to as 'multi-racial consultations'.²⁴³ During lunch hour meetings, multi-racial consultations were discussed and endorsed by faculty councils, including the conservative engineers, religious societies (Catholic, Jewish and Islamic), as well as political and discussion groups.²⁴⁴ However, probably because of the government clampdown and military call-up just prior to the declaration of the Republic on 31 May, the Wits authorities banned meetings of the LP and PP while the chief magistrate proscribed the mass meeting scheduled to adopt the UCT/NUSAS convention motion.²⁴⁵

²³⁷ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie (Geffen), 'Martin' (?) and Hugh (Lewin), 19.6.1961; M4.1, Adrian Leftwich to Thumba Pillay, 17.5.1961; 20.6.1961.

²³⁸ BC 586 B1, Adrian Leftwich to Alan Paton, 24.5.1961.

²³⁹ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie Geffen, 26.4.1961.

²⁴⁰ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Hugh Lewin, 14.6.1961; M1 (File December 1960 to August 1961), 'Smith' at 'White Cottage' (Adrian Leftwich) to 'MG dear, dear friend', nd.

²⁴¹ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie Geffen and Hugh Lewin, 12.5.1961.

²⁴² *New Age*, 18.5.1961.

²⁴³ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 13 no. 9, 26.5.1961.

²⁴⁴ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie Geffen and Hugh Lewin, 12.5.1961; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 13 no. 9, 26.5.1961.

²⁴⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 13 no. 9, 26.5.1961; *New Age*, 8.6.1961; 26.5.1961.

Consequently, the Wits student body overwhelmingly endorsed the national convention in a SRC-sponsored referendum.²⁴⁶

The Rhodes student body adopted the national convention motion *nem con*²⁴⁷ and against the expectations of the NUSAS leadership, so did Durban, though in a somewhat qualified fashion.²⁴⁸ The UNNE student body, on which NUSAS pinned its hopes for driving the national union's policy in a progressive direction, had already adopted the All-In Conference's call for a national convention despite the opposition of the still vocally powerful NEUM and reservations from some that the All-In Conference was itself racist, being restricted to Africans.²⁴⁹ With UNNE back within the NUSAS fold, NEUM had intensified its verbal and ideological war against NUSAS²⁵⁰ and thus put up strong opposition²⁵¹ to UNNE's adoption of NUSAS's tactically moderate national convention motion.²⁵²

Attesting perhaps to the overtly political nature of the motion and the restrictions imposed on training colleges regarding party politics, seventeen representatives abstained from taking a stand on the national convention against forty seven who endorsed it. NUSAS thus issued a statement to the press locating its demand for a sovereign national convention firmly within the contemporary issues (for NUSAS and South Africa) of the anti-colonial movement on the African continent and South Africa's increasing international isolation. The statement read: that noting 'the impasse towards which this country is moving and the refusal of the government to consider the grievances of the majority of people of South Africa, NUSAS pledges its support to those calling for a national convention'. The statement claimed further that NUSAS would 'do all in its power to assist in the realisation of this goal' which is vital for the establishment of a democratic South Africa and for South Africa to take its place in the community of nations and 'come to terms with the developments in the continent of Africa.'²⁵³ A couple of months later, the NUSAS congress instructed the president to make contact with all bodies working towards the summoning of a national convention,²⁵⁴ but to ensure that NUSAS was not to become ensnared in a 'Prog-UP consultation' added the descriptor 'truly representative'.²⁵⁵ Durban attempted to limit NUSAS's support for the convention to educational matters only²⁵⁶ and pressed for the amendment of the resolution to NUSAS rejecting a universal

²⁴⁶ BC 586 B1, Clive Rosendorff, 'Report to NUSAS Assembly, July 1961', p. 7; *New Age*, 8.6.1961.

²⁴⁷ A. Berkowitz to *Rhodeo*, 23.6.1961; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 13 no. 9, 26.5.1961.

²⁴⁸ *Dome*, 17.8.1961; BC 586 B1, D. Gordon, 'Report of the University of Natal (Durban) Student Representative Council', 1961, pp. 4-5.

²⁴⁹ BC 586 M4.1, Thumba Pillay to Adrian Leftwich, 25.4.1961; T60, B. Pillay, 'Non-European SRC, University of Natal', nd.; *New Age*, 25.5.1961.

²⁵⁰ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 6.11.1962, p. 2.

²⁵¹ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh (Lewin) to 'Hoek' (Adrian Leftwich), 18.5.1961.

²⁵² BC 586 M4.1, Thumba (Pillay) to Adrian Leftwich, 10.5.1961; Adrian Leftwich to Thumba Pillay, 1.6.1961.

²⁵³ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1961, p. 73; T60, 'Statement issued by the President of NUSAS on the call for a National Convention', 29.5.1961.

²⁵⁴ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1961, p. 48; *New Age*, 20.7.1961; Jill Jessop, 'NUSAS conference shows students support struggle for freedom', *Contact*, 27.7.1961.

²⁵⁵ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Hugh Lewin, 14.6.1961.

²⁵⁶ 'SB', 'NUSAS Congress 1961', *Counter Attack*, August 1961, p. 5.

franchise in a democratic South Africa, a measure which was implied by linking the convention motion to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.²⁵⁷

The convention resolutions gave NUSAS a degree of leeway to engage in overtly political activities and make contact with what remained of the Congress Alliance. In the aftermath of Sharpeville and coupled to the (re-)affiliation of UNNE and the radical Johannesburg SACHED branch, this was both necessary and inevitable. In the opinion of the COD-aligned *Counter Attack*, NUSAS was becoming a more truly non-racial body with the foundations of genuine friendships and political contacts being laid at the 1961 congress,²⁵⁸ but nonetheless its relationship with the Congresses left much to be desired.²⁵⁹ This was amply illustrated by the speed with which a message from Nelson Mandela of the All-In Conference lauding the stand of students in the anti-Republican stay-away²⁶⁰ was whisked away and received no mention in the NUSAS assembly minutes.

NUSAS did not endorse the All-In Conference's call for a national stay-away, presumably because this was party political, and NUSAS had no policy on the Republic. This was a matter of concern to black students, the 1959 vice-president, Billy Modise questioning NUSAS's failure to take a stand. Nonetheless, the NUSAS office remained open on Republic Day. The NUSAS front at UCT, the Radical Society, joined the call of the Congress-aligned 'Student Action Group' for a stay-away.²⁶¹ It commended the convention and stay-away organisers for their continuing 'dedication' to non-violent change but warned students that time was running out.²⁶² *Die Burger* made much political capital from this leading to the UCT principal threatening disciplinary action against anyone 'undermining' the university.²⁶³ Nonetheless, some UCT students did boycott classes on 29 and 30 May.²⁶⁴

The reaction of the Wits authorities to similar calls was harsher and more interventionist and indirectly affected NUSAS. To the consternation of the Wits authorities who confiscated some of them, a variety of leaflets and posters appeared on the campus, including one signed by Nelson Mandela urging students to stay at home.²⁶⁵ Voicing similar sentiments to those of the UCT Radical Students' Society, the editor of the Wits student newspaper argued in a contentious editorial that 'non-whites' were justified in turning to violence against a 'minority dictatorship' and thus called on

²⁵⁷ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1961, pp. 47-48.

²⁵⁸ 'SB', 'NUSAS Congress 1961', *Counter Attack*, August 1961, p. 5.

²⁵⁹ *ibid.*

²⁶⁰ *New Age*, 20.7.1961.

^s *New Age*, 18.5.1961; BC 586 M1, Adrian Leftwich to SRCs and AFCs, 5.6.1961; T60, 'To all students at the University of Cape Town', 'Issued by the RSS on behalf of the Student Convention Committee, Rondebosch', nd.; BUZV, University of Cape Town, 'Protests', Manuscripts and Archives Division, Jagger Library, University of Cape Town, 'To the Students at U.C.T. and the University College of the Western Cape' 'From the Students' Action Group. U.C.T.' nd.

²⁶² 'To all students at the University of Cape Town', 'Issued by the RSS on behalf of the Student Convention Committee, Rondebosch', nd.

²⁶³ BC 586 T60, 'Statement on behalf of the Radical Students' Society', nd.

²⁶⁴ *New Age*, 1.6.1961.

²⁶⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 13 no. 9, 26.5.1961; *New Age*, 8.6.1961.

students to support the strike as a non-violent means of struggle.²⁶⁶ The newspaper in question was withdrawn and the editor disciplined by both the Wits authorities and the SRC for encouraging a stay-away. He resigned his position in acrimonious circumstances²⁶⁷ and was thrown off the Wits delegation to the forthcoming NUSAS congress.²⁶⁸ Nonetheless, students at Wits did support a stay-away, leading to the cancellation of some lectures in the Arts Faculty.²⁶⁹

UNNE students boycotted classes²⁷⁰ as did those at the University College of the Western Cape (UCWC) and Fort Hare. However, strikers at the new ethnic colleges were met with intimidation from their authoritarian college authorities and/or the state. In an attempt to pre-empt the success of the stay-away compulsory tests were scheduled at UCWC on the days leading up to Republic Day and all one hundred and forty boycotters were threatened with expulsion.²⁷¹ Against the backdrop of a militarised campus, the entire Fort Hare student body embarked on a three day stay-away, at the conclusion of which the university was closed and students sent home until further notice.²⁷²

NUSAS publicly defended Fort Hare's anti-Republican stance in terms of the students' rejection of the authoritarian system of university apartheid and Bantu Education.²⁷³ A sympathy stay-away, in protest at the closure of Fort Hare, was embarked on by a majority of Rhodes students²⁷⁴ although the student body as a whole remained deeply divided over the issue.²⁷⁵ This surprisingly militant action can be partly explained by the intensity of anti-Republicanism and anti-Nationalism. For example, Rhodes students erected an 'anti-Republican wall' in one of their residences.²⁷⁶ English-speakers in Natal, and to a lesser extent, the Eastern Cape, could always be relied on to protest against the loss of their rights, as happened during the 'constitutional crisis' of 1951-2, but most were not prepared to extend their protest to the loss of black rights. The organisers of a mass meeting at Rhodes on the 31 May made it clear that this was not intended to be an anti-Republican gathering but rather a forum to make known the student body attitude towards events in the country 'in accordance with human rights'.²⁷⁷

At Pietermaritzburg, as at Wits,²⁷⁸ the COD embarked on an intensive propaganda campaign,²⁷⁹ which, coupled to the Natal Stand and the fear of call-up, resulted in the student body voting for a sit-

²⁶⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 13 no. 9, 26.5.1961.

²⁶⁷ *ibid.*, no. 10, 23.6.1961; *New Age*, 8.6.1961.

²⁶⁸ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 13 no. 10, 23.6.1961.

²⁶⁹ *New Age*, 8.6.1961.

²⁷⁰ BC 586 T60, B. Pillay, 'Non-European SRC, University of Natal', nd.; *New Age*, 25.5.1961; 1.6.1961.

²⁷¹ BC 586, A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie (Geffen) and Hugh (Lewin), 17.5.1961; B1, 'Report of the University College of the Western Cape', 1961, p. 3.

²⁷² *New Age*, 6.6.1961.

²⁷³ BC 586 M1, Adrian Leftwich to 'News Edition', 2.6.1961.

²⁷⁴ *New Age*, 8.6.1961.

²⁷⁵ *ibid.*; *Rhodeo* vol. 15 no. 3, 23.6.1961; no. 4, 14.8.1961.

²⁷⁶ *Rhodeo* vol. 17 no. 13, 8.8.1963.

²⁷⁷ BC 586 T60, J.E. Moulder, D. van Zyl, I.A. McDonald to 'Members of Rhodes University', 29.5.1961.

²⁷⁸ *New Age*, 8.6.1961.

²⁷⁹ 'As long as I get my grub' by 'A Maritzburg Student', *Counter Attack*, August 1961.

down strike in favour of the national convention. This was opposed by the conservatives who did not wish to be associated with the simultaneous All-In strike.²⁸⁰ Despite being proscribed by the chief magistrate, the protest went ahead and was broken up by troops and armed police.²⁸¹ This was the first occasion on which the military and police invaded a white campus.²⁸² The action revealed the paranoid, authoritarian political climate of the time, which resembled that of the state of emergency of 1960. It also perhaps indicates the state's intention to crush any liberal opposition at Pietermaritzburg in preparation for the transformation of the campus, along with that of the Natal Training College, into a Nationalist enclave.

The General Law Amendment Act, 1962

Following the inauguration of the Republic, the convention movement limped along a little longer. In October 1961, NUSAS co-sponsored a 'Cape Convention' with a variety of organisations which included the Black Sash and former members of the banned ANC.²⁸³ However the convention movement had effectively died by the end of 1961. The ANC adopted new tactics of sabotage and exploded its first installation on 16 December 1961, the 'Day of the Vow', a historically symbolic day for Afrikaner nationalism. With the announcement of an early general election scheduled for October 1961, the white opposition parties directed their attention to defeating the NP at the polls.²⁸⁴ This was not to be. For the first time since 1948, the NP received a majority of white votes, including a substantial number of English-speaking ones. The UP's representation in parliament shrunk further despite its electoral alliance with the NU. The NU and PP were almost decimated, both parties retaining just one seat each - that of Basson in Bezuidenhout and Suzman in the wealthy Houghton constituency, respectively. Faring worse than the electorally more viable PP was the LP,²⁸⁵ whose candidates had stood solely to put across radical Liberal ideas, the party having recognised earlier the irrelevance of white electoral politics as a vehicle for change.²⁸⁶ Afrikaner dissent was silenced for the time being.²⁸⁷ Thus, with the backing of a white population traumatised by the events of Sharpeville and African nationalism, the government set about eliminating all remaining dissent through the construction of a police state along the lines of that already experienced during the state of emergency and the declaration of the Republic.

²⁸⁰ *ibid.*

²⁸¹ *ibid.*; BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1961, pp. 73-74.

²⁸² *Counter Attack* reported that the SRC president was also arrested. This would be the first time that a white student leader was arrested on the campus. 'As long as I get my grub' *op. cit.*

²⁸³ BC 586 T60, Adrian Leftwich to Presidents of SRCs, 'Report on the Cape Provincial Consultative Conference, organised by the South African Convention Movement, on 14th October, 1961, at St Saviour's Hall, Claremont, Cape Town', 17.10.1961; R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

²⁸⁴ R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

²⁸⁵ J. Robertson, *Liberalism in South Africa 1948-1963*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971, pp. 209-210; D. O' Meara, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-109. Robertson points out that in a number of constituencies the PP was only narrowly defeated by the UP.

²⁸⁶ R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, p. 154; M. Cardo, *Opening men's eyes: Peter Brown and the Liberal struggle for South Africa*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg and Cape Town, 2010, pp. 161-164.

²⁸⁷ D. O' Meara, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-109.

In May 1962, the General Law Amendment Bill (or 'Sabotage Bill') appeared before parliament. It abrogated the rule of law by allowing detention without trial and placed the onus on the defendant to prove his/her innocence and allowed for the banning of individuals, organisations and publications. Moreover, as with the definition of 'communism' in the Suppression of Communism Act, 'sabotage' was defined so broadly that any call for change could be construed as sabotage, making the caller liable to the death penalty.²⁸⁸

NUSAS itself could fall foul of these measures. Along with the LP, the Black Sash and the churches, the national union protested vehemently against the Bill as being an abrogation of academic freedom, the rule of law and human rights. Together with the Standing Committee of SRC Presidents, NUSAS mounted a campus-wide campaign against this new draconian measure.²⁸⁹ This campaign was as inclusive as possible so as to attract maximum student participation. Many students were disillusioned with the efficacy of protest, while others were either apathetic, or like the UP, supported the Bill. Adopting Wits' strategy utilised during the national convention campaign, endorsement by as many campus societies as possible was sought.²⁹⁰ A wide range of political parties, organisations and individuals were invited to address the various student bodies. These included representatives of the PP,²⁹¹ the Transvaal Indian Congress²⁹² and Albert Geysers,²⁹³ newly appointed professor of Divinity at Wits. (Geysers had recently been found guilty of trumped up charges of heresy by the *Nederduits Hervormde* Church and dismissed from the University of Pretoria for his opposition to apartheid.²⁹⁴)

The emphasis of the campaign differed on each campus. At this time, Pietermaritzburg and the Natal Midlands were seething with underground anti-Republican activity,²⁹⁵ the lineage of which could be traced back to the Torch Commando's 1951-2 'Malanazi' campaign (discussed in chapter two). Thus Pietermaritzburg students stressed the Nazi nature of the General Law Amendment Bill, designing the front page of their student magazine in the shape of a swastika in which were embedded scenes from the Warsaw Ghetto flanked by the faces of Verwoerd and Hitler.²⁹⁶ The NP press and NP student leaders²⁹⁷ responded furiously to this allegedly slanderous Nazi jibe.²⁹⁸ However, E.G. Malherbe, principal of Natal University and head of military intelligence during the Second World

²⁸⁸ *Witwatersrand Student, Special Anti-Sabotage Bill Issue* vol. 14 no. 11, 24.5.1962; D. Welsh, *The rise and fall of apartheid*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg and Cape Town, 2009, pp. 75-76.

²⁸⁹ *Witwatersrand Student, Special Anti-Sabotage Bill Issue* vol. 14 no. 11, 24.5.1962; *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 6, 2.6.1962.

²⁹⁰ BC 586 B1, Neil Callie, 'Report to 38th NUSAS Assembly, July 1962', pp. 5-6; *Witwatersrand Student Special Anti-Sabotage Bill Issue* vol. 14 no. 11, 24.5.1962.

²⁹¹ *Day Student*, 22.5.1962.

²⁹² *New Age*, 21.6.1962.

²⁹³ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 9, 11.5.1962; *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 7, 14.6.1962.

²⁹⁴ I. Wilkins and H. Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaners: inside the Afrikaner Broederbond*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1980, pp. 293-305.

²⁹⁵ Even a Durban NUSAS Local Committee chairperson claimed to be involved in a sabotage group working for independence in Natal. BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Hugh Lewin and Laurie Geffen, 10.1.1960 [sic] 1961.

²⁹⁶ *Nux* no. 4, 24.5.1962.

²⁹⁷ *Die Matie*, 15.6.1962.

²⁹⁸ *Nux* no. 6, 21.6.1962.

War, defended the student editors by pointing out that Vorster, the Minister of Justice, responsible for the Bill and interned during the War, had had a great war-time admiration for the swastika.²⁹⁹

All the NUSAS-affiliated universities held campus mass meetings³⁰⁰ as well as demonstrations off-campus, some as at Wits, Durban and Rhodes³⁰¹ in conjunction with other civil society organisations.³⁰² Marches by Wits,³⁰³ Durban³⁰⁴ and UCT³⁰⁵ students were banned but a few nonetheless went ahead and were met with police and/or vigilante interference or violence.³⁰⁶ For liberals and radicals, this indicated that even prior to the enactment of the Sabotage Bill, South Africa had become a police state. The campaign culminated in a solemn mass meeting on academic freedom and human rights at UCT in June 1962 attended by all the SRC presidents and addressed by Leftwich and Albert Geyser.³⁰⁷ A torchlight procession to parliament to present a petition signed by four thousand students opposed to the Bill was banned by the Cape Town Municipality on instructions from the police. Nonetheless, the procession went ahead in a manner which legally circumvented its proscription. Despite the believed legality, a number of students were arrested and the rest locked in a garden.³⁰⁸

Despite the extra-parliamentary opposition, the General Law Amendment Act was passed in 1962, effectively dismantling the rule of law. The radical left was virtually silenced on campus following the banning of the COD in September 1962³⁰⁹ and *New Age* ceased publication in terms of the Sabotage Act. Ironically, campus co-operation between members of the COD and the LP had improved significantly since 1961 with the UCT Radical Society and the Congress-aligned Modern World Society holding joint protest demonstrations.³¹⁰ The Indian Congresses escaped proscription and despite the NUSAS leadership's reservations about their East-bloc-aligned foreign policy, made a decision to actively work with them.³¹¹ Thus representatives of the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress (TIYC) attended the 1962 NUSAS congress as observers. However, the student assembly attempted to veto further co-operation with them unless NUSAS also co-operated with the PP Youth. NUSAS required political credibility from the Congresses and the presence of the TIYC served this

²⁹⁹ *Nux*, no. 5, 7.6.1962; *Varsity* vol. 11 no. 13, 17.6.1962.

³⁰⁰ *Varsity* vol. 11 no. 10, 23.5.1962; *Nux* no. 5, 7.6.1962; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 11, 24.5.1962; *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 7, 14.6.1962.

³⁰¹ *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 6, 2.6.1962.

³⁰² *Witwatersrand Student, Special Anti-Sabotage Bill Issue* vol. 14 no. 11, 24.5.1962; vol. 14 no. 12, 8.6.1962.

³⁰³ BC 586 B1, Neil Callie, 'Report to 38th NUSAS Assembly, July 1962', pp. 5-6.

³⁰⁴ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 12, 8.6.1962; *Varsity* vol. 21 no. 12, 13.6.1962.

³⁰⁵ *Varsity* vol. 21 no. 12, 13.6.1962.

³⁰⁶ *ibid.*

³⁰⁷ BC 586 B1, Neil Callie, 'Report to 38th NUSAS Assembly, July 1962', pp. 5-6; *Day Student*, 12.6.1962; *Varsity* vol. 21 no. 13, 20.6.1962.

³⁰⁸ *Varsity* vol. 21 no. 13, 20.6.1962; 15.8.1962. *Day Student*, 26.6.1962; *Nux* no. 6, 21.6.1962; *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 8, 8.8.1962; *New Age*, 21.6.1962.

³⁰⁹ M. Legassick and C. Saunders, 'Aboveground activity in the 1960s', South African Democracy Education Trust, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, volume 1, 1960-1970*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004, p. 665.

³¹⁰ *Varsity* vol. 21 no. 11, 6.6.1962.

³¹¹ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 11.5.1962, p. 8.

purpose.³¹² It was perhaps for this reason that the student assembly accepted the argument of the radical NUSAS leadership that the Indian Youth Congresses were primarily cultural entities.³¹³ This assertion is difficult to sustain because though they were not attached to political parties contesting elections (as the PP Youth was), the TIYC, for example, was a deeply political body 'quite ready for action' whose newsletter was entitled *Combat*.³¹⁴

The 1962 congress and the further radicalisation of NUSAS policy

In addition to the TIYC, the presence of the radical black affiliates of UNNE, SACHED and the Johannesburg Institute for Indian Teacher Training (JIIT) ensured that NUSAS did not take a rightward turn towards the PP. Instead, the assembly moved to the left with some fundamental changes in policy. Though NUSAS had already theoretically done so in 1957 with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it finally abandoned the 'students-as-such' position in 1962 and declared its intention to oppose apartheid *in toto*. There were many reasons for this. It was becoming increasingly difficult to separate educational and political issues, as, for example, in the case of the national convention. NUSAS leaders were also becoming increasingly frustrated about their inability to participate in political activities in their personal capacities because their actions would inevitably be associated with NUSAS. If NUSAS had no policy on these political issues the leadership's personal political activities would antagonise NUSAS's mass membership.³¹⁵ Moreover, even after Africanising its delegation,³¹⁶ NUSAS, like the COD, discovered that multi-racialism, non-racialism and white participation in African liberation movements, were viewed with suspicion by participants in Pan-African conferences. This left NUSAS delegates no choice but to sign all-embracing anti-apartheid statements as they had done in Accra in 1960.³¹⁷ The radical SACHED branch challenged NUSAS to submerge itself in the anti-apartheid movement, and fulfill the requirements of the Freedom Charter.³¹⁸

NUSAS faced other challenges to its hegemony in the student union arena. Following the support given by students to the national convention and anti-Republican stay-away, the Congresses decided that an African Students Association be established. The SACHED branch under Thabo Mbeki played a pivotal role in ensuring its launch in December 1961.³¹⁹ (This is discussed in chapter seven.) In addition, a new non-racial and politically committed student body, the Progressive

³¹² Gavin Williams via email, 27.11.2014.

³¹³ *Nux* no. 7, 9.8.1962; BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1962, pp. 6-7; '38th NUSAS Congress: Press Release No. 2', 1962.

³¹⁴ P. Landau, 'The ANC, MK, and 'the turn to violence', 1960-1962', *Southern African Historical Journal* vol. 64 no. 3, 2012, p. 553.

³¹⁵ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to Adrian Leftwich, 2.4.1961.

³¹⁶ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Hugh Lewin, 12.2.1961; 17.3.1961; Hugh Lewin to Adrian Leftwich, 15.2.1961; B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to 'The Executive (Denis, Mike and Thami)', 5.6.1962.

³¹⁷ *Die Matie*, 21.10.1960; BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to Adrian Leftwich, 2.4.1961.

³¹⁸ BC 586 B1, A.T. Zwane, 'Report of the SACHED Students' Committee, Johannesburg, 1962, NUSAS Congress – Rhodes', p. 2.

³¹⁹ T. Mbeki, 'African students have a mission: why new association was formed', *New Age*, 4.1.1962.

National Students Organisation (PNSO), made an appearance in 1961-2³²⁰ (discussed in chapter seven) and there were serious rumblings of disaffection at Fort Hare. The ISC – composed of large numbers of student unions from the developing world - abandoned its ‘students-as-such’ orientation.³²¹ This allowed it to pass overtly political resolutions against imperialism and colonialism which NUSAS, as a loyal and active participant was also obliged to do both in the ISC forums abroad and, at the request of SACHED, at home during the 1961 NUSAS congress.³²² The NUSAS president felt that NUSAS was also located in the developing world where ‘political, social and economic security were not assured’ and should thus accept its responsibility of ‘bring[ing] about a change of heart in South Africa’.³²³

In his opening address at the 1962 congress, Leftwich reminded those present that the national union had in fact abandoned the ‘students-as-such’ position in 1957, but had not yet fully implemented it. It was his belief that the enactment of the ‘totalitarian’ Sabotage Bill marked a ‘turning point’ in South Africa’s history which meant that NUSAS now had to ‘deliver the goods’³²⁴ and work for a democratic dispensation. Present at the 1962 NUSAS congress was a representative of the West German students’ union. He argued in favour of NUSAS putting into practice the ‘student-in-society’ position by explaining that West German students had had no choice but to adopt a political line when the newly constructed Berlin Wall cut off East Berlin students from their university in West Berlin.³²⁵ Thus with the support of most of the assembly, NUSAS declared that ‘the problems in... education can only ... be resolved once...apartheid and totalitarianism... [have] been removed’³²⁶ and resolved that students as citizens ‘had no choice but to take an active stand’ against any law which directly or indirectly violated human rights.³²⁷ The revised policy did however specifically rule out NUSAS aligning itself with any political party.³²⁸ Nonetheless, Ex-Chief Albert Luthuli, Nobel Peace Prize winner and the banned president of the banned ANC, was elected honorary president of NUSAS.³²⁹ Following Luthuli’s acceptance, the NUSAS president stated that Luthuli’s association with the national union would be ‘an incentive to students to work harder’ ‘for the New South Africa that must come’.³³⁰

³²⁰ BC 586 A2.1, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 5.6.1962; B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, ‘Fort Hare disaffiliates from NUSAS: a reflection on student dissatisfaction: envisaging a progressive national student organisation’, 4.10.1961, pp. 4-5; Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 23.8.1962, pp. 2-3.

³²¹ *Rhodeo Comment*, 25.8.1962.

³²² BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1962, pp. 83-85.

³²³ BC 586 B1, ‘The official opening of congress’, ‘Press Releases’, 1962.

³²⁴ BC 586 B1, ‘Annual Presidential Address by Mr. A. Leftwich at the Official Opening of the 38th Annual Congress of NUSAS (July, 1962)’, p. 5.

³²⁵ *Nux* no. 7, 9.8.1962; *Rhodeo Comment*, 25.8.1962; *Dome*, October 1962.

³²⁶ BC 586 B1, ‘38th NUSAS Congress – Press Release No. 8’, 1962; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 15, 3.8.1962.

³²⁷ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1962, pp. 61-62; *Contact*, 9.8.1962, p. 5; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 15, 3.8.1962.

³²⁸ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1962, pp. 61-62; ‘38th NUSAS Congress – Press Release No. 8’, 1962; *Dome*, 27.8.1962.

³²⁹ *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 16, 17.10.1962.

³³⁰ *ibid.*

A new South Africa different to the one hoped for and envisaged by NUSAS and Luthuli was coming into being with the substantial increase in the defense budget and the extension of military service for all white males to almost a year. NUSAS viewed these developments with alarm, particularly as the government - other than alleging that South Africa was threatened from without - was very evasive about the role to be played by these future conscripts. With the hindsight of Sharpeville and Langa, NUSAS feared, prophetically, that troops would be deployed in the townships to defend apartheid and oppress their fellow South Africans.³³¹ Thus the student assembly mandated the executive to lobby for the recognition of the moral right to refuse to undergo racially exclusive military training which could be used to further apartheid. One of the methods envisaged of achieving this was through canvassing eminent individuals to support the right to conscientious objection.³³² At this time French students faced similar moral dilemmas regarding their conscription into the French army tasked with fighting Algerian independence. NUSAS unequivocally supported the cause of Algerian liberation³³³ and expressed its solidarity with the French student union facing harassment from its government regarding its endorsement of Algerian self-determination.³³⁴ Thus, it could be argued that the NUSAS conscription resolution, with its 'eminent persons tactic' had similarities, as *New Age* noted, to the 'Manifesto of Insubmission'³³⁵ or 'Manifesto of the 121' signed in 1961 by leading French citizens such as Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir which upheld the right of French soldiers not to serve in Algeria.³³⁶

Another controversial issue resolved at the 1962 congress was NUSAS's relationship with the ASB. The NUSAS leadership had concluded that it was more principled and important to cater for its expanding radical black membership than to continue pandering to the white co-operationists in its increasingly conservative white ranks. Moreover, it was realised that many within this constituency could leave NUSAS in the near future. This was particularly true for the teacher training colleges and technikons where in the face of both growing conservatism and government-inspired restrictions on student activities, NUSAS faced an uncertain future. Moreover, many student leaders believed that continuing attempts to engage with an organisation like the ASB was deeply insulting and humiliating to black students.³³⁷ Thus in the run-up to the 1962 NUSAS congress, NUSAS carefully prepared the ground for breaking off ties with the ASB. Histories of NUSAS's relations with the ASB were strategically placed in the student press which proved conclusively that the ASB was the cause of non-co-operation and not NUSAS.³³⁸ Moreover, a forty-strong NUSAS branch³³⁹ was established by

³³¹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 9, 11.5.1962; no. 15, 3.8.1962.

³³² BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1962, p. 54; '38th NUSAS Congress – Press Release No. 8', 1962; *Dome*, 27.8.1962; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 15, 3.8.1962; *Contact*, 9.8.1962.

³³³ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1962, p. 78; *Contact*, 27.7.1961.

³³⁴ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1962, p. 67.

³³⁵ *New Age*, 16.8.1962.

³³⁶ 'The Manifesto of the 121', *International Socialist Review*, Winter, 1961, <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspaper/isr/vol22/no01/manifesto121.htm> accessed 1.7.2015.

³³⁷ BC 586 B1, '38th NUSAS Congress: Press Release No. 5', 1962; *New Age*, 2.8.1962.

³³⁸ *Nux* no. 2, 6.4.1962.

André Michau (later an Anglican priest in Namibia) at Stellenbosch in early 1962. It was predominantly English-speaking, 'but not exclusively so' and politically liberal, some of its members having been associated with the post-Sharpeville, *Pro Libertate* publication³⁴⁰ mentioned earlier. The branch decided to test the sincerity of the NP by applying to the NP-controlled SRC for official recognition based on the *Die Transvaler's* unlikely assertion that 'Afrikaans universities' unlike Wits, for example, 'were the real models of liberty' and thus NUSAS was free to operate on any Afrikaans-medium campus.³⁴¹ The thoroughly alarmed SRC immediately banned the branch,³⁴² claiming that NUSAS's opposition to Christian Nationalism could not be tolerated and moreover, it was impossible for two student organisations to operate simultaneously on the campus.³⁴³ Tertius Delport, president of the SRC and a member of the ASB executive (later a leading NP parliamentarian before joining the Democratic Alliance) threatened to expel from the 'Students' Union' any individual who joined NUSAS.³⁴⁴ Nevertheless, he encouraged English-speakers to affiliate to the ASB through an English Bond of their own creation.³⁴⁵ The events at Stellenbosch played into the hands of those in NUSAS wishing to effect a final break with the ASB. The debate at congress was long and heated but eventually against the wishes of JCE and some at Pietermaritzburg, NUSAS did sever all ties with the ASB, with the clarification that the resolution did not apply to individual student bodies and SRCs affiliated to the cultural body.³⁴⁶

Far more controversial than the ASB decision was the SACHED-initiated resolution on the status of South African degrees. SACHED had originally threatened to propose that NUSAS support an academic boycott of South Africa³⁴⁷ but was evidently persuaded to put forward something less drastic and divisive which had a chance of being accepted by the student assembly. Thus the motion expressed NUSAS's misgivings about the currency of South African degrees in the light of firstly, large-scale academic immigration following the introduction of university apartheid and the events of Sharpeville and secondly, the increasing international isolation in which South African universities found themselves. Thus overseas institutions were requested to express an opinion on the matter. There was much opposition to this from those who believed the motion amounted to a vote of no-confidence in South Africa's educational system and/or that it was presumptuous of NUSAS to take it

³³⁹ *Day Student*, 10.4.1962; *Varsity*, 11.4.1962.

³⁴⁰ Gavin Williams via email, 26.11.2014.

³⁴¹ BC 586 A2.1, Roger Jowell to 'Left' (Adrian Leftwich), 2.4.1962; *Witwatersrand Student*, 27.4.1962.

³⁴² Andre J. Michau to *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 8, 4.5.1962.

³⁴³ *Die Matie*, 11.5.1962; *Varsity*, 29.8.1962.

³⁴⁴ Andre J. Michau to *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 8, 4.5.1962; BC 586 B1, '38th NUSAS Congress: Press Release No. 5', 1962.

³⁴⁵ *Die Matie*, 11.5.1962; *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 7, 14.6.1962; Andre J. Michau to *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 8, 4.5.1962.

³⁴⁶ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1962, p. 24; *Day Student*, 2.8.1962; *New Age*, 2.8.1962.

³⁴⁷ BC 586 B1, A.T. Zwane, 'Report of the SACHED Students' Committee, Johannesburg, 1962. NUSAS Congress – Rhodes', p. 1.

upon itself to evaluate South African degrees.³⁴⁸ Ultimately, against the wishes of forty percent of the assembly,³⁴⁹ 'those who felt that the national union was obligated to publicise the disastrous consequences of racial discrimination won the day'³⁵⁰ and the resolution was passed.

The 'degree motion' would be the plank on which those disaffected with NUSAS at Rhodes, Pietermaritzburg and JCE would build their case for disaffiliation from the now unquestionably radical NUSAS. In this they would become the unwitting pawns of the South African government endeavouring to sever NUSAS's conservative student base from its radical leadership. In August 1962, a student mass meeting at Rhodes voted overwhelmingly to dissociate itself from the degree resolution. More seriously, a disaffiliation motion was tabled too but was amended substituting automatic affiliation to NUSAS with individual voluntary membership.³⁵¹ Leftwich, who attended the meeting³⁵² to avert disaffiliation, was extremely worried about the 'snowballing' consequences that Rhodes's changed status could have on other centres³⁵³ and so put a positive public spin on it by letting it be known that Rhodes had simply changed its method of enrolment.³⁵⁴ Moreover, NUSAS realised that the situation was not as bad as it could have been as the right wing had failed to take control of the Rhodes SRC's mandate to NUSAS congresses. Henceforward, voting at NUSAS congresses would be determined by NUSAS members alone, who, it was assumed, would be further to the left than the more conservative SRCs predicted for the future.³⁵⁵

As with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights apartheid motion in 1957 (see chapter three) the disaffiliation saga occurred in the midst of the battle between Rhodes and the NP for control of the Rhodes University branch in Port Elizabeth. As part of the NP campaign, *Die Oosterlig* carried a series of articles claiming, as *Die Transvaler* was doing with regard to Wits and the campaign for an Afrikaans university on the Rand, that Rhodes discriminated against Afrikaans students, which Rhodes Afrikaans-speakers denied.³⁵⁶ Both the Rhodes authorities and the SRC stated their strong opposition to the proposed closure of the Port Elizabeth campus and its replacement with a new bilingual 'independent' institution outside Rhodes' jurisdiction.³⁵⁷

³⁴⁸ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1962, pp. 37-38; 'NUSAS Press Release No. 7 – 38th Annual Congress', 1962, p. 2; *Dome*, 27.8.1962; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 15, 3.8.1962; *Contact*, 9.8.1962; *Day Student*, 2.8.1962.

³⁴⁹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes, pp. 37-38.

³⁵⁰ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 15, 3.8.1962.

³⁵¹ *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 10, 22.8.1962.

³⁵² C.H. Cubbitt to *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 11, 29.8.1962.

³⁵³ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Derek Bostock, 20.8.1962.

³⁵⁴ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 23.8.1962.

³⁵⁵ *ibid.*

³⁵⁶ *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 2, 13.4.1962; Vic Gattrel to *Rhodeo*, 29.8.1962; 'Jan Transvaler' to *Rhodeo* vol. 17 no. 5, 4.4.1963.

³⁵⁷ *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 16, 17.10.1962.

Since 1959, as noted earlier, agricultural students at Pietermaritzburg had organised themselves into a powerful conservative and disruptive bloc on the SRC³⁵⁸ but in 1962 they failed to put up any candidates for the election to the SRC. This provided grist to the rumour mill of an electoral boycott followed by a vote of no-confidence in the newly elected SRC. This would force a bye-election leading to agricultural control of student government.³⁵⁹ Ultimately there was neither a vote of no-confidence nor a bye-election. However, a motion requesting Pietermaritzburg's disaffiliation from NUSAS was only lost through the casting vote of the new SRC chairperson.³⁶⁰ Although investigative reporters could find no direct evidence to support this, suspicions existed that the electoral boycott was linked to a wider NP agenda.³⁶¹ During 1962, rumours emanating from authoritative sources in the City Council and on the university staff about an ongoing plan, hatched some years before, of a NP takeover of Pietermaritzburg surfaced in the latter half of 1962. The takeover would be achieved in phases. Firstly, the committee aimed to work for an independent Pietermaritzburg university and thereafter win control of its Senate through the civil servant status of the staff of the Agriculture Faculty.³⁶² It is interesting to note that the regional head of the *Broederbond* at that time was Professor S. Hulme of the Faculty of Agriculture.³⁶³

The 1962 NUSAS congress marked a new departure in not only policy but also the presidency. For the first time in NUSAS's history, a theologian and minister of religion was elected to head the national union. Basil Moore, president-elect of NUSAS was an ordained minister of the Methodist Church and president of the Rhodes SRC, which for a number of years had been under the hegemony of theology students. It was expected that Moore would be 'more acceptable' to NUSAS's mass student base but ultimately he was refused permission by the Methodist Church to take up the NUSAS office.³⁶⁴ Thus during the latter half of 1962, NUSAS was faced with succession crises both for the presidency as well as on the SRCs at its affiliated campuses.

Succession crises were not new. In most years NUSAS was concerned that there was an insufficient number of charismatic and, ever more importantly, progressive and sufficiently politically committed student leaders to take NUSAS and its campuses forward in the right political direction. However, by the end of 1962, the succession crisis was more acute than before. NUSAS had definitely moved to the left, and arguably could be considered one of the most radical organisations still operating legally in South Africa. However, it had not taken all its campus leadership and certainly not its seventeen thousand-strong student base with it. There were many reasons for this. Adrian Leftwich singled out

³⁵⁸ The NUSAS president said of the 1961/2 UNP SRC that the 'agric element' was a force to be reckoned with and comprised a 'bolshie, almost fascist group of farmers', anti-NUSAS, 'anti anything that pricks their conscience'. BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 11.5.1962.

³⁵⁹ *Nux* no. 8, 22.8.1962; no. 9, 7.9.1962.

³⁶⁰ *Die Matie*, 12.10.1962.

³⁶¹ *Nux* no. 8, 22.8.1962.

³⁶² *ibid.* no. 7, 9.8.1962; no. 9, 7.9.1962; *Dome*, 27.8.1962.

³⁶³ I. Wilkins and H. Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaners: inside the Afrikaner Broederbond*, Jonathan Ball, 1980, p. A108.

³⁶⁴ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', Unpublished memoir, p. 4.

generational turnover. The new upcoming leaders had not been politicised and radicalised by the academic freedom campaign of the 1950s. They also had very little experience of a racially open university and had thus come to accept as normal the *status quo* of almost completely white campuses. At Rhodes, not only was a generation of radical theologians graduating³⁶⁵ but contact between Fort Hare and Rhodes, which had kept Rhodes on the right path, had also declined.³⁶⁶ Another factor, not specifically mentioned in NUSAS correspondence, was the rise of the PP as a force in student politics. It is very clear from a reading of the minutes and correspondence of 1962 that many student leaders, even at the traditionally radical Wits, had found a home for themselves within the new party. PP adherents were opposed to the boycott tactic and heralding a divisive debate of the 1970s and 80s, attempted to introduce a motion at the 1962 NUSAS congress that while they rejected Bantu Education in its entirety, they also regretted the boycott of school by African school children.³⁶⁷ Some PP adherents opposed the conscription resolution while others felt that the application of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights could lead to a universal franchise which they opposed.³⁶⁸ As noted earlier in the debate about the attendance of the PP Youth at NUSAS congresses, the Progressives were not opposed to NUSAS playing a direct political role but rather were concerned at the form this would take and in alliance with whom.

How did NUSAS intend to address these challenges? In the past it had tended to rely on SRCs and Local Committees to further the NUSAS agenda, but evidently these could not be guaranteed. The president of the 1961/2 Wits SRC had supported the radical direction in policy at the 1962 congress, but the NUSAS leadership believed this was not out of conviction, but rather because of the historically radical tradition and mandate of Wits. His natural successor, Hugh Kowarsky, was of the post-'open university' generation,³⁶⁹ and like the president of the JCE SRC and the natural successor at Durban, was a Progressive (he fought the SRC election as a PP activist), and had opposed many of the new aspects of 1962 NUSAS policy. Thus NUSAS continued its policy begun after Sharpeville of creating campus pressure groups which would push the NUSAS agenda. One such at Wits which produced good results was the controversial Human Rights Society established in 1962. The Local Committees (barely functioning at for example Wits), would be shored up by political education and leadership programmes (already begun)³⁷⁰ for second and third year students. These would take the form of weekend regional seminars (similar to those introduced by the LP) which would be (secretly) funded by the United States National Student Association

³⁶⁵ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 23.8.1962, p. 4.

³⁶⁶ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 12.1.1962; Adrian Leftwich, 'Memorandum on campaign for educating students on the problems of university, education and human freedoms', 8.11.1962.

³⁶⁷ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1962, p. 30.

³⁶⁸ BC 586 B1, B. Van Bruggen, 'Report to the NUSAS Assembly July 1962, covering the period August 1961- June 1962', pp. 6-7.

³⁶⁹ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Derek Bostock, 15.8.1962, p. 3.

³⁷⁰ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 11.5.1962.

(NSA).³⁷¹ The campus Academic Freedom Committees would be responsible for general student political education on university apartheid, academic freedom and non-racialism. In order to retain general campus support, NUSAS stressed as always that attention had to be paid to advertising and providing practical student benefits. NUSAS's commitment to practical benefits and education were extended off-campus to non-students with the introduction of a literacy programme in the Transkei (discussed in chapter nine) to be funded again from the USA. NUSAS was also playing a role in the establishment of a leadership training programme in Bechuanaland. These all added to NUSAS's workload and thus the vice-presidency also became a paid full-time position funded again by the NSA.³⁷²

It is quite clear that by the end of this period, NUSAS was becoming financially dependent on the fairly conservative United States NSA, though in terms of political orientation it was more aligned with African-American student civil rights organisations. There is also evidence of NUSAS cutting the colonial umbilical cord with Britain in the face of both the global trend towards Americanisation and alignment with students in the developing world. A move towards continental Europe and the emerging New Left is also discernible in, for example, the conscription resolution.

Conclusion

The events of Sharpeville, the endorsement of the national convention and active opposition to the Sabotage Bill transformed NUSAS into a radical organisation in terms of its leadership and policy, poised on pursuing a far more activist role in the eradication of apartheid. However, this activist role was seriously jeopardised by firstly, NUSAS's failure to take much of its student membership with it (much of it had become more conservative than before) and secondly, the terms of the Sabotage Act which made most political action illegal and even threatened the proscription of NUSAS. NUSAS was fully aware of the latter and had prepared its activist base for the risks of illegal action, by, for example, hosting a symposium on the ethics of illegal action at the 1962 congress. However, even before the enactment of the Sabotage Act, the NUSAS president and international vice-president, Leftwich and Lewin respectively, as well as former NUSAS president Rubin had concluded, like the Congresses, that legal protest was futile and that something like sabotage was the only tactic capable of bringing about an end to apartheid. The consequences of this will be discussed in chapter nine.

Nineteen sixty two marked the end of a dynasty of remarkable NUSAS leaders. It was due to these leaders (Wentzel, Coombe, Rubin, Shingler and Leftwich) that NUSAS in the face of ever greater apartheid encroachments into education had managed to weld together an organisation committed

³⁷¹ BC 586 A2.1, Maeder Osler to Dave Adler, 30.3.1965.

³⁷² BC 586 B4.1, JontyDriver to the Executive, 'Events from January to February 1963', 26.2.1963.

to the creation of a democratic South Africa which included a political spectrum ranging from the Baptist students on the right to the revolutionary SACHED on the left. It would require a strong, experienced and battle-hardened leadership, like the one retiring from student politics, to retain this broad church in the face of direct state attacks on NUSAS in the forthcoming years.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NUSAS and the ethnic university colleges, 1960-1965

Introduction

Following the enactment of the Extension of University Education Act in 1959, NUSAS embarked on a multi-pronged programme of action aimed at, in some instances, bypassing university apartheid altogether, in others, mitigating its effects, or finally, making it unworkable. Firstly, the South African Council for Higher Education (SACHED) was established to enable black students to study through the University of London rather than attend the ethnic institutions. Secondly, in a rather symbolic gesture, the open universities and Natal would be entirely desegregated while simultaneously becoming exclusively white. Thirdly, NUSAS hoped that through its assistance, the student bodies at the new ethnic universities would make their institutions unworkable by provoking and staging much publicised crises. Fourthly, NUSAS would ensure that it would remain an open organisation and as representative of as many student bodies as possible.

This chapter will evaluate how successful NUSAS was in firstly, retaining the support of Fort Hare students and gaining the affiliation of those at the new University Colleges of Zululand (Ngoye), Durban-Westville (Salisbury Island) and the North (Turfloop) and secondly, making these institutions unworkable. This chapter will demonstrate how authoritarian government control ensured that traditionally free student life, including affiliation to NUSAS, became impossible at all the ethnic colleges with the result that NUSAS activity, if any, moved underground like that of the banned ANC and PAC and still quasi-legal Indian Congresses. At Fort Hare and UNNE (the latter a springboard onto Salisbury Island), NUSAS activists were first and foremost ANC and Natal Indian Congress activists. This had the effect of pushing NUSAS into closer contact with the liberation movements, consequently radicalising the national union. Following the security crackdown of 1963, NUSAS increasingly filled the void left by the decimated liberation movements, ensuring that values like human rights and academic freedom remained in currency at some institutions. This chapter will also show that a combination of repression, ignorance and generational change ensured that a significant number of students at the ethnic universities were pragmatically resigned and even relatively accepting of tribal college life and were accordingly hostile to NUSAS values and the national union's attempt to destabilise their institutions. This, combined with an assertive Africanism discernible particularly at Turfloop, influenced the emergence of the Black Consciousness ideology of the late 1960s.

The desire for a separate African student organisation led to the establishment of the ANC-aligned African Students' Association (ASA) and the PAC-aligned African Students' Union of South Africa (ASUSA). Both organisations posed a threat to NUSAS as firstly, their existence could lead to the haemorrhaging of NUSAS's African members, transforming the national union

into a *de facto* white body and secondly, played into the government's hand and its desire for apartheid structures.

The expropriation of Fort Hare and retaining its affiliation

Through its close contact with Fort Hare since its re-affiliation in 1957, and strengthened by the presence of committed NUSAS executive members at Rhodes like Hugh Lewin, NUSAS was able to keep a finger on the pulse of activities at the new Xhosa college, something it could not do at the other new ethnic institutions.¹

The events at Fort Hare during the early 1960s need to be understood within the context of African reaction and resistance to government policy and the state's attempts to stamp out this resistance. Following the legislation of the Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act in 1959 which would lead to Transkeian self-government in 1963, the state accelerated its controversial 1951 Land Betterment Scheme, abolished the fairly legitimate elected Transkeian and Ciskeian General Councils and began the consolidation and re-tribalisation of Eastern Cape districts into Bantu Authorities under compliant African chiefs.² These measures sparked a rural revolt in the Transkei and Ciskei between 1960 and 1963, which pitted peasants, urban migrants, and to a lesser degree, adherents of the All African Convention, the ANC and even elements within the LP as well as a number of Fort Hare students against the government and collaborating Bantu Authorities chiefs.³ During the same period, African schools were wracked by serious turmoil as scholars resisted the manifestations of Bantu Education. Perennial issues such as subsistence and discipline became even more politicised than in the past in the face of increasing authoritarianism and deteriorating food. Fort Hare students had only superficial links to the Pondoland and Thembuland Uprisings (e.g. Anderson Ganyile, expelled from Fort Hare in 1960 for his ANC activities led the Pondoland 'Mountain Committee'⁴) but very definite ties to Bantu Education schools. Fort Hare student leaders, Chris Hani,⁵ Barney Pityana,⁶ and Anderson Ganyile,⁷ had all been leading members of the banned ANCYL while at Lovedale during the late

¹ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 19.2.1960.

² S. Matoti and L. Ntsebeza, 'Rural resistance in Mpondoland and Thembuland, 1960-1963', South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 1, 1960-1970*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004, pp. 177-208; R. Vigne, *The Transkei - a South African tragedy*, Africa Bureau, London, nd., p. 11.

³ R. Kayser and M. Adhikari, 'Land and liberty! The African People's Democratic Union of South Africa during the 1960s', South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 1, 1960-1970, op. cit.*, pp. 319-339; T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1985, p. 283; R. Vigne, *Liberals against apartheid: a history of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 1963-68*, MacMillan and St Martin's, Basingstoke and New York, 1997, pp. 166-167; S. Matoti and L. Ntsebeza, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-208; G. Mbeki, *South Africa: the peasants' revolt*, Penguin, Harmondsworth Middlesex, 1964.

⁴ G. Mbeki, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁵ J. Smith and B. Tramp, *Hani: a life too short*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg and Cape Town, 2009, pp. 29, 33.

⁶ M. Gevisser, *Thabo Mbeki: the dream deferred*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg and Cape Town, 2007, p. 160; D. Massey, *Under protest: the rise of student resistance at the University of Fort Hare*, UNISA Press, Pretoria, 2010, p. 206.

⁷ T. Karis and G. Carter, *From protest to challenge: a documentary history of African politics in Southern Africa 1882-1964*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1972-1977, Microfilm Collection, Reel 2: XG2 File 10A, Anderson Ganyile.

1950s and early 1960s. Moreover, the ANC Eastern Cape Command instructed its Fort Hare members to conscientise children at the surrounding schools.⁸

Despite the government takeover of Fort Hare in 1960 and the national proscription of the ANC shortly thereafter, the Fort Hare Youth League, unusual in that it was multi-racial,⁹ remained a formidable but increasingly underground presence on the campus.¹⁰ Govan Mbeki, of the ANC's Eastern Cape Command, maintained close ties with Fort Hare students and ensured that the campus participated in national ANC campaigns.¹¹ During the late 1950s, a group within the Fort Hare Youth League debated the efficacy of non-violence and began 'to prepare for the eventuality of an armed struggle taking place'.¹² With the establishment of a branch of the PAC at Fort Hare in 1959, there existed the possibility of the further radicalisation of the student body. However, unlike the militant national organisation, the Fort Hare PAC branch did not play an active role in campus politics but concerned itself largely with discussion groups on Pan-Africanism.¹³ It could nevertheless be relied on to support the non-collaborationist Society of Young Africa (SOYA) in its attacks on white liberals, collaborators and multi-racialism. However, the PAC remained part of the Fort Hare united front opposing university apartheid.¹⁴

It is thus not surprising that an independent Fort Hare, built on missionary liberalism and exporting alien and subversive ideas to the surrounding countryside, needed to be destroyed and brought into line with Christian National Bantustan policy. Even before the official government expropriation of Fort Hare in January 1960, preparations for liberal-missionary cleansing were set in motion. Twenty four students, including most of the 1959 SRC, were refused re-admission to Fort Hare in 1960¹⁵ by the Bantu Education Department which took over the application and admission processes.¹⁶ The students in question were apparently 'uncooperative' and were allegedly the organisers of a demonstration against the new college authorities who visited Fort Hare in late 1959¹⁷ (discussed later). NUSAS ensured that these effective expulsions were widely

⁸ J. Smith and B. Tramp, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

⁹ 'Stanley Mabizela April 19, 1999 Cape Town: Interview by Danny Massey', www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpages/DC/oral19990419 accessed 22.11.2012, p. 5.

¹⁰ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, pp. 185, 187.

¹¹ T. Karis and G. Carter, *From protest to challenge volume 4, Profiles of African politics in South Africa, 1882–1964*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1977, p. 84.

¹² A. Masondo, 'Sawing electric pylons', *Dawn Souvenir Issue*, 1996, pp. 21-23 cited in S. Ellis, 'The genesis of the ANC's armed struggle in South Africa 1948-1961', *Journal of Southern African Studies* vol. 37 no. 4, December 2011, pp. 664-665.

¹³ 'Stanley Mabizela April 19, 1999 Cape Town: Interview by Danny Massey', www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpages/DC/oral19990419 accessed 22.11.2012, p. 5; D. Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

¹⁴ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

¹⁵ BC 586 M1, H.J. du Preez to S. Makana, s/222-11.2.1960; B1 Presidential Report 1960, p. 12, *Eastern Province Herald*, 23.2.1960; Anderson Ganyile to *New Age*, 25.2.1960; *Witwatersrand Student*, 9.8.1960.

¹⁶ D. Williams, *A history of the University College of Fort Hare, South Africa – the 1950s: the waiting years*, Edward Mellen Press, Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter, 2001, p. 522.

¹⁷ BC 586 M1, 'Summary of Press Report Appearing in the "Evening Post", 20th Feb. 1960'.

publicised and was instrumental in securing places for the students concerned at either UNNE¹⁸ or in the newly launched SACHED programme.

After being required to complete questionnaires distributed by the Bantu Education Department regarding their attitudes to apartheid, etc., eight senior members of staff (all white and English-speaking) were dismissed, as well as the wardens of the church-owned and controlled student residences. With the exception of the conservative Donovan Williams, professor of the ideologically sensitive discipline of History,¹⁹ all the victims were believed to have had close ties to the student body and anti-government²⁰ LP sympathies. The elderly Z.K. Matthews was forced to resign from the college, forfeiting his entire pension when he refused to accept the government's deliberately draconian conditions for the continuation of his tenure.²¹ The government in turn blatantly lied to the public by claiming that Matthews had resigned from the ANC to retain his Fort Hare position.²² Other staff members, both black and white, also resigned when they were presented with their new conditions of service. Black staff members and any new appointees were classified civil servants thus depriving them of their academic freedom and freedom of association.²³ The contract of Burrows, the caretaker principal, was not renewed because of his unequivocal opposition to the expropriation of Fort Hare.²⁴ His place was taken by a 'rector' with vastly augmented powers in the person of John Jurgens Ross, a committed member of SABRA, a Law lecturer at the UOFS, a former Bantu Education school inspector,²⁵ and member of the Board of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church.²⁶

Twenty three vacant academic posts had to be filled – seventy five percent of the staff complement.²⁷ To ensure ideological conformity, many of these positions were not publicly advertised but were filled internally by the Department of Bantu Education.²⁸ Most of the new appointees were graduates of either the Afrikaans-medium universities or UNISA²⁹ and were most likely government supporters. Although touted as an African university, very few black academics were appointed to any positions after the government takeover, leading to a decline in black staff numbers from thirty five percent in 1960, to nineteen percent in 1969.³⁰ In terms of the Fort Hare Transfer Act (discussed in chapter five), the management of the new ethnic university was vested

¹⁸ BC 586 M1, John Shingler to Professor Gordon, 3.2.1960.

¹⁹ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 147; D. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 509, 525-530.

²⁰ BC 586 M1, Neville Rubin to SRCs and Local Committee Chairmen, 'Fort Hare', 5.10.1959; M1, Fort Hare SRC, 'Press Statement', 8.10.1959.

²¹ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-151.

²² BC 586 M1, Billy Modise to Neville Rubin, 9.10.1959.

²³ M. Beale, 'The task of Fort Hare in terms of the Transkei and Ciskei: educational policy at Fort Hare in the 1960s', *Perspectives in Education* vol. 12, no. 1, 1990, p. 43.

²⁴ D. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 487, 491.

²⁵ M. Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

²⁶ *Irawa*, August 1959.

²⁷ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

²⁸ M. Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 45.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 44.

in a newly constituted totally white Council.³¹ A parallel black Advisory Council,³² composed primarily of collaborating Bantu Authorities traditional leaders and conservative Moral Rearmament adherents³³ was a sop to the idea of African control. Likewise, a white Senate and a black Advisory Senate replaced the non-racial body. These staffing and governing measures fundamentally altered the ideological character of Fort Hare and were instrumental in transforming the college into a Bantu Education institution and in the opinion of Gwala, an extension of the NP-orientated Afrikaans-medium universities.³⁴

So too did the new rules and regulations that new and returning students were forced to accept as condition for their registration in 1960.³⁵ In the opinion of the NUSAS president, these were more suited to a penal institution than a university³⁶ and by restricting students' freedom of movement and association were designed to stamp out all opposition to government policy.³⁷ Students were forbidden to leave the grounds, receive visitors, be associated with any organisation, call meetings or issue press statements without the rector's permission. Contravention could result in expulsion. Once the new regime was in place, students discovered that the library holdings were censored,³⁸ church services became indoctrination events,³⁹ collaborating wardens sat in on all meals,⁴⁰ paid *primarii* or students enticed with allowances and bursaries spied on their peers or were threatened with the withdrawal of their scholarships if they did not.⁴¹ More disturbingly, the security police became an almost permanent feature of campus life.⁴² With the support of its affiliated SRCs, NUSAS publicised and protested against these conditions, both before and after the government takeover.⁴³

The NUSAS president, Rubin, visited Fort Hare during the latter part of 1959.⁴⁴ It is probably for this reason that the NP press held NUSAS responsible for the tightly and anonymously organised demonstration that greeted the new administrators when they visited Fort Hare for a pre-takeover

³¹ D. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 517-518.

³² M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1958-1959*, South African Institute of Race Relations, Cape Town, 1959, pp. 272, 276.

³³ *New Age*, 21.1.1960.

³⁴ N. Gwala, 'State control, student politics and black universities', W. Cobbett and R. Cohen (eds), *Popular struggles in South Africa*, Africa World Press, London, 1988, p. 170.

³⁵ D. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 552-554.

³⁶ BC 586 M1, 'Statement issued by Mr J. Shingler, President of the National Union of South African Students on the "Draft Regulations for Control of Students at Fort Hare College', 5.2.1960.

³⁷ *New Age*, 25.2.1960.

³⁸ *Varsity*, 3.8.1960.

³⁹ BC 586 B1, Appendix 2, 'Fort Hare University College Report to NUSAS Congress, July 1960', p. 90.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ A. Mager, *Gender – the making of a South African Bantustan: a social history of the Ciskei*, Heinemann, Portsmouth, 1999, p. 211.

⁴² T. Beard, *Leadership* vol. 9 no. 10, November/December 1990/1991.

⁴³ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Hugh Lewin, 30.9.1960; M1, 'Statement issued by Mr J. Shingler, President of the National Union of South African Students on the "Draft Regulations" for Control of Students at Fort Hare College', 5.2.1960; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 12 no. 13, 16.8.1960.

⁴⁴ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1959, p. 7.

inspection in October 1959.⁴⁵ On arrival at a campus bedecked with inaccessible banners and posters and a pirate flag fluttering on the greased flagpole,⁴⁶ Ross, Professor S. Pauw of UNISA (UNISA would replace Rhodes as the Fort Hare examining body⁴⁷) and H.J. du Preez, the registrar-elect, were greeted by mourning, black armband-clad students who, during the course of the day, pelted them with eggs and tomatoes and deflated the tyres of their cars. Some of the staff milled around the students, enjoying the pageant.⁴⁸ The government could but have no doubt of the opposition of Fort Hare students and some of the staff to the imminent change of status of their institution and so sought to nip it in the bud. The tomato and flag demonstration was the reason given for the refusal to readmit members of the 1959 SRC to the college in 1960.⁴⁹

Although not intended as a gesture of defiance against the forthcoming ethnicisation of the college, the decision of the Fort Hare Senate to enroll a record number of new students in 1959 and, in doing so, waiving its traditional quota on coloured and Indian students, effectively meant that Fort Hare retained its multi-ethnic and multi-racial student body well into the 1960s. Student numbers swelled to almost five hundred in 1959 but shrank to three hundred and sixty the following year⁵⁰ with only fifty new students, almost all of whom were Xhosa-speaking, admitted in 1960.⁵¹ Many of these students were non-matriculants pursuing diploma and certificate courses.⁵² As warned by all those who opposed the Fort Hare Transfer Act, student numbers were projected to fall even more sharply in the future (and did to two hundred in 1962⁵³) because of the ethnic nature of admissions⁵⁴ and the abysmally small pool of African matriculants. Desperate to make their ethnic engineering experiment succeed, the Fort Hare authorities pursued a policy of divide and rule. Preferential treatment was meted out to the new first year Xhosa-speakers at the expense of the multi-racial and multi-ethnic majority of returning students, the latter being made to feel they were unwelcome and barely tolerated.⁵⁵

All eyes, both hostile and anxiously hopeful, were on Fort Hare when it opened in February 1960. In a bizarre - and in the light of the Separate Amenities Act and a new government directive that black and white were forbidden to shake hands - illegal attempt to win the support of its detractors, the opening function of the new ethnic Fort Hare took place at a non-racial freshers'

⁴⁵ *Irawa*, October 1959.

⁴⁶ BC 586 M1, Billy Modise to Neville Rubin, 19.10.1959; B3 Executive Minutes 1959, p. 6; *New Age*, 29.10.1959; D. Massey, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-160; D. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 547-550.

⁴⁷ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1958-1959*, p. 271.

⁴⁸ BC 586 M1, Billy Modise to Neville Rubin, 19.10.1959; B3 Executive Minutes 1959, p. 6; *New Age*, 29.10.1959; D. Massey, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-160; D. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 547-550.

⁴⁹ BC 586 M1, 'Summary of Press Report Appearing in the "Evening Post", 20th Feb. 1960'.

⁵⁰ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1961*, pp. 252, 258.

⁵¹ *New Age*, 17.3.1960.

⁵² *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 20, 14.9.1962.

⁵³ M. Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁵⁴ *New Age*, 17.8.1960.

⁵⁵ BC 586 B1, Appendix 2, 'Fort Hare University College Report to NUSAS Congress, July 1960', pp. 89-90; M1, J. Shingler to Stud. Repr. [sic] Councils, Academic Freedom Committees, NUSAS Executive, 'Fort Hare Affiliation to NUSAS', 19.2.1960; *New Age*, 17.3.1960; *Dome*, August 1960; *Varsity*, 3.8.1960.

ball hosted by the SRC. The function was opened by a processional march of new white 'Nationalist' male academic staff members partnered by the (black) wives of their black colleagues. The SRC was to comment that this was the first, last and only non-racial social event ever held at the new apartheid university.⁵⁶

Elections to the SRC were traditionally held at the beginning of the academic year. Ross had initially decided against retaining this tradition, but because this would be grist to the anti-government mill, was persuaded, presumably by higher authorities, to permit some form of student government.⁵⁷ With the expulsion of most of the 1959 SRC weighing heavily upon them, the student body deliberated whether they should set their leadership up for victimisation but eventually decided that to retain the character of a 'real' university they should hold elections.⁵⁸ Ross informed the new SRC, chaired by Seretse Choabi, ANC and NUSAS activist (sentenced to Robben Island in 1964 and later ANC Secretary for Education in Zambia),⁵⁹ that its task was to implement government policy.⁶⁰ A fight ensued between the SRC and Ross about the proposed new SRC constitution, which the SRC could not accept.⁶¹ Again, so as to maintain a semblance of university life, students held their annual Fort Hare rag.⁶² This was met with interference by the Fort Hare authorities who, intent on destroying the liberal, philanthropic ethos of the old missionary university, confiscated the rag money meant for charity and insisted that it be used to provide student bursaries.⁶³ In addition, presumably to conform to the requirements of Bantu Education, it was decreed that future rag magazines would appear in Xhosa, instead of English, with a few Afrikaans articles thrown in too.⁶⁴

The docile Xhosa tribal college hoped for and envisaged by the Fort Hare authorities would definitely have no place for NUSAS, viewed by the government and its supporters as an agitator body intent on stirring up disorder and conflict among essentially satisfied students. Among the students expelled in 1959, were also some NUSAS activists. Thus, early in the new year of 1960, NUSAS embarked on a campaign based on its anticipated proscription at Fort Hare. This would have the effect of drawing negative attention to the college⁶⁵ and affecting its workability. However, the Fort Hare rector did not take the bait and publicly ban NUSAS, resulting in NUSAS

⁵⁶ BC 586 B1, Appendix 2, 'Fort Hare University College Report to NUSAS Congress, July 1960', pp. 88-92.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 88; *New Age*, 17.8.1960; *Dome*, August 1960.

⁵⁸ BC 586 B1, Appendix 2, 'Fort Hare University College Report to NUSAS Congress, July 1960', pp. 88-90.

⁵⁹ 'Death of ANC Education Secretary, Seretse Choabi', www.anc.org.za accessed 28.11.2012; South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa: South Africans telling their stories, volume 1*, Mutloadse Arts Heritage Trust, Johannesburg, 2008, p. 250.

⁶⁰ *Dome*, August 1960; *Varsity*, 3.8.1960.

⁶¹ *Varsity*, 3.8.1960.

⁶² BC 586 B1, Appendix 2, 'Fort Hare University College Report to NUSAS Congress, July 1960', p. 88.

⁶³ BC 586 B3 Confidential Executive Minutes 1960, p. 2.

⁶⁴ BC 586 B1, Appendix 2, 'Fort Hare University College Report to NUSAS Congress, July 1960', p. 88.

⁶⁵ BC 586 B4.1, John Shingler to the Executive, 19.2.1960.

having to abandon its large-scale press and campus-wide protest action.⁶⁶ Following correspondence between NUSAS and Ross, NUSAS was informed that the Fort Hare SRC was no longer affiliated to the national union⁶⁷ because, as Ross alleged to the SRC, NUSAS was composed of agitators wishing to disturb the calm and order of Fort Hare. A solid united front coalesced around the affiliation issue with a student mass meeting calling for the reversal of Ross's decision, but to no avail.⁶⁸

During a visit to the Eastern Cape shortly after Sharpeville, the NUSAS executive was able to meet Fort Hare student leaders in secret where it was quite clear that even those previously opposed to the national union were united in their opposition to Ross's dictatorship.⁶⁹ Although threatened with immediate arrest were he to enter the Fort Hare campus, Shingler was able to inform Ross, whom he caught sitting on the verandah of his home in Alice, that NUSAS regarded Fort Hare as an affiliated member until the student body (to whom the rector referred as 'his children') alone, and not the rector, decided otherwise.⁷⁰ Security police interference and the searching of the NUSAS executive's car marred the two-day trip to Alice.⁷¹ Shortly thereafter, Ross reiterated his earlier threat to have any Fort Hare student caught furthering the aims of NUSAS expelled.⁷² This put at risk some NUSAS (and ANC) activists like Thami Mhlambiso (later ANC representative in New York, an extraordinary individual cast in the mould of Mandela⁷³ who together with Thabo Mbeki was Oliver Tambo's 'blue-eyed boy'⁷⁴), and Stanley Mabizela (later of the ANC's international affairs department and ambassador to Namibia in 1994).⁷⁵

Fort Hare students were forbidden to attend the 1960 NUSAS congress but were secretly present at the 'select committee' convened after the event which discussed, *inter alia*, further action to be taken against NUSAS's banning at Fort Hare.⁷⁶ This select committee transformed itself into the Standing Committee on Academic Freedom composed of the presidents and vice-presidents of NUSAS-affiliated SRCs. It would function like an American cabinet and discuss the abrogation of all aspects of student rights and would focus particularly on the ethnic colleges.⁷⁷ This structure had the advantage of bringing on board NUSAS campaigns all SRCs, thus broadening and

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 14.3.1960.

⁶⁷ BC 586 M1, J. Ross to J. Shingler, 11.3.1960.

⁶⁸ BC 586 B1, Appendix 2, 'Fort Hare University College Report to NUSAS Congress, July 1960', p. 89; *Varsity*, 3.8.1960.

⁶⁹ BC 586 B1, Appendix 2, 'Fort Hare University College Report to NUSAS Congress, July 1960', p. 89.

⁷⁰ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1960, pp. 6-7.

⁷¹ *Varsity*, 27.4.1960; *Dome*, May 1960.

⁷² BC 586 B1, Appendix 2, 'Fort Hare University College Report to NUSAS Congress, July 1960', p. 89.

⁷³ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

⁷⁴ L. Callinicos, 'Oliver Tambo and the politics of class, race and ethnicity in the African National Congress of South Africa', *African Sociological Review* vol. 3 no. 1, 1999, p. 142.

⁷⁵ M. Gevisser, *Thabo Mbeki: the dream deferred*, Jonathan Ball, Jeppestown, 2007, pp. 345-346.

⁷⁶ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 13.6.1960, p. 2; Hugh Lewin to Adrian Leftwich, nd., c. August 1960, p. 2.

⁷⁷ BC 586 M4.1, Adrian Leftwich to 'DS' (?) D.S. Rajah, 6.1.1961; A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Hugh Lewin, 6.1.1961.

legitimising NUSAS activities. However, the Standing Committee's weakness lay in the conservatism of some of its members, particularly at Rhodes, Pietermaritzburg and Durban. These SRCs were afraid of embarking on possibly illegal activity during and shortly after the state of emergency⁷⁸ and were in any case more concerned with white co-operation than events at Fort Hare and the ethnic colleges. For this reason they were kept in the dark about some of NUSAS's plans.⁷⁹ The further action (conspiratorially codenamed 'tea-party') planned by the Standing Committee entailed the five SRC presidents and the NUSAS executive delivering speeches in support of academic freedom outside the gates of Fort Hare,⁸⁰ and presenting themselves at the rector's office to reinstate Fort Hare's official affiliation to NUSAS.⁸¹ The 'tea-party' did not go according to plan. With the Chettle conference on white co-operation looming on the nearby horizon (discussed in chapter six), the SRCs of Rhodes, Durban and Pietermaritzburg pulled out, as did, at the last minute, those of UCT and Wits. This left only the NUSAS executive (Shingler, Leftwich and Lewin) with the task of defying the ban on entering the Fort Hare campus and in so doing, effectively provoking a confrontation with the authorities regarding Fort Hare's affiliation to the national union.⁸²

The 'tea-party' of 7 September 1960 occurred against a backdrop of escalating resistance and counter-resistance in the Eastern Cape. In June 1960 the 'Mountain Committee' at Nqusa Hill, a nascent state, was bloodily suppressed after rejecting Bantu Authorities. By the end of 1960, the Eastern Cape revolts had demanded the introduction of a universal franchise in place of tribal political organisation and the end of Bantu Education. Successful boycotts of white trading stores and non-payment of taxes followed in pursuit of these goals. At the same time, hut burning of traditional leaders aligned to Kaiser Matanzima, controversially claiming for himself the so-called paramountcy of Emigrant Thembuland, accelerated.⁸³ Members of the LP embarked on a campaign to link up rural resistance with the 'national picture' and accordingly undertook the organisation of a march to Umtata, enlisting the assistance of Fort Hare students whom they met secretly in a forest in September 1960.⁸⁴ Also coinciding with NUSAS's September visit was the announcement by the ANC of its intended anti-pass campaign during the October republican referendum.⁸⁵ In November 1960, Proclamation 400 was gazetted, imposing a state of emergency over the whole of the Transkei. The Minister of Bantu Administration and Development explained that this measure would empower the chiefs to arrest 'white communist agitators' and 'Patrick

⁷⁸ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to Ros (Traub), 9.8.1960.

⁷⁹ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Hugh Lewin, 6.1.1961.

⁸⁰ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to Adrian Leftwich nd., c. August 1960, p. 2.

⁸¹ BC 586 M1, 'Fort Hare Report August 1960–July 1961', p. 1.

⁸² BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Hugh Lewin, 21.9.1960.

⁸³ G. Mbeki, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-122, 129.

⁸⁴ R. Vigne, *Liberals against apartheid, op. cit.*, pp. 166-167.

⁸⁵ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1959-1960*, p. 73.

Duncan and his kindred spirits' operating in Thembuland.⁸⁶ This racist perception that Africans were incapable of initiating and sustaining independent political action without white involvement was already held by the Fort Hare authorities and the government regarding student protest and the role of NUSAS therein. Presumably this would have a bearing on the authority's reaction to the 'NUSAS tea-party' too.

Once the NUSAS executive had arrived on campus, Ross reluctantly allowed the Fort Hare SRC to meet the visitors in his office but during this very heated meeting refused the request of both the SRC, and later the student body, that the NUSAS leaders address a student mass meeting. NUSAS was accused of inciting the student body and was alleged to have been responsible for the tomatoes thrown at the visiting delegation the previous year.⁸⁷ The executive was subsequently ordered off the campus but later that day did manage to address the student body outside the university despite security police presence. NUSAS pledged its continued support to Fort Hare students and re-iterated its opposition to university apartheid. Likewise, the mass meeting confirmed its loyalty to NUSAS and discussed general conditions on the campus.⁸⁸ However, the student body was reluctant, fearful and too disgruntled with NUSAS to take any militant action after the Standing Committee had reneged on its undertaking to come to Fort Hare. However, Mhlambiso, the newly elected NUSAS vice-president, managed to persuade them otherwise.⁸⁹

After NUSAS's departure the campus was in uproar. A further mass meeting was held at which the student body successfully forced the reluctant and frightened rector, who brought his Senate Executive Committee with him for protection, to attend and answer their grievances. These included the banning of NUSAS, the flouting by the authorities of the SRC constitution, the transformation of the SRC into little more than a puppet body, the expulsion of the 1959 student leadership, the authoritarianism and lack of freedom on the campus, and the rector's public condonement of police action at Sharpeville and Langa enunciated at the recent SABRA conference. Moreover, Ross was censured for withdrawing the SRC's financial autonomy, his failure to rectify students' grievances regarding the library and more importantly, his insistence that wardens sit in on meals and spy on students in the dining room.⁹⁰ Ross was called on to resign, but he refused. The SRC, no longer prepared to be a puppet, dissolved itself. Ross pleaded with them to reconsider this decision and promised to draw up a new constitution, but to no avail. The student body voted to suspend lectures and embarked on a boycott of the dining

⁸⁶ R. Vigne, *Liberals against apartheid*, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

⁸⁷ *NUSAS Newsletter* no. 24, 27.3.1961, p. 1.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

⁸⁹ BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 29.4.1962.

⁹⁰ BC 586 M1, 'Fort Hare Report August 1960–July 1961', p. 3. *Rhodeo* vol. 14 no. 5, 16.9.1960.

hall.⁹¹ Chaos erupted and, after a hated dining room warden was wounded by flying cutlery, the rector suspended classes too. The authorities attempted unsuccessfully to deflect attention away from the loss of student rights and autonomy of the SRC by publicly projecting the crisis as one stemming from ill-discipline in the dining halls.⁹² Ross went to Pretoria for advice and in the meantime, all students were given twenty four hours in which to sign a declaration of conduct, failing which they would be expelled. A mass meeting voted to ignore the declaration but this was subsequently rescinded when armed riot police arrived in Alice. Eventually the whole cowed and fearful student body⁹³ 'capitulated' in the words of the disappointed NUSAS president, the last person to sign being an overwrought Mhlambiso.⁹⁴

The SABC announced that the students' demand for a new constitution would be met.⁹⁵ This and the arrival of the police on campus demonstrate how important the state considered the success and functioning of the new ethnic colleges to be. The Afrikaans student press expressed its concern at the suspension of classes worrying that this indicated the failure of the ethnic colleges.⁹⁶ At the opposite end of the political spectrum, progressive student observers hopefully, but in the end wrongfully, believed that the crisis at Fort Hare coupled with the fewer than expected registrations had made the whole system of tribal colleges unworkable and unviable.⁹⁷

As the NUSAS executive had hoped, the student bodies at the NUSAS-affiliated campuses voiced their sympathy and support for the plight of their Fort Hare counterparts and denounced the actions of the college's authorities. SRCs passed strong resolutions decrying the abrogation of Fort Hare student rights which flowed from university apartheid and significantly, some moved beyond the narrow limits of apartheid education and demanded the implementation of democratic government in South Africa.⁹⁸ In addition, UCT students held both a mass meeting and a sit-in protest.⁹⁹ The Fort Hare and Rhodes authorities accused the conservative and intimidated Rhodes SRC, which was becoming progressively more opposed to NUSAS, of fermenting the Fort Hare crisis. This followed the interception by the security police of telephone calls made to Fort Hare from the SRC offices by Lewin, the NUSAS vice-president at Rhodes.¹⁰⁰

⁹¹ NUSAS Newsletter no. 24, 27.3.1961, p. 1; BC 586 M1, 'Fort Hare Report August 1960–July 1961', p. 3.

⁹² BC 586 M1, 'Fort Hare Report August 1960–July 1961', p. 4; D. Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

⁹³ BC 586 M1, 'Fort Hare Report August 1960–July 1961', pp. 4-5.

⁹⁴ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to John Shingler and Adrian Leftwich, 14.9.1960; *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 24, 28.9.1960.

⁹⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1961, p. 57.

⁹⁶ *Die Wapad*, 28.9.1960.

⁹⁷ *Dome*, October 1960.

⁹⁸ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Hugh Lewin, 21.9.1960; B3 Executive Minutes 1960, p. 5; B1 Presidential Report 1961, p. 58; B1, 'Report of the University Coll. of the Western Cape' 1961, p. 1.

⁹⁹ NUSAS Newsletter no. 24, 27.3.1961.

¹⁰⁰ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh (Lewin) to John (Shingler) and Adrian (Leftwich), 14.9.1960; *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 26, 14.9.1960; 28.9.1960; *Dome*, October 1960; *Die Matie*, 21.10.1960.

For Fort Hare, the result of the 'September crisis' was a tightening of restrictions and further limitations on freedom of speech and movement.¹⁰¹ Twenty five students were threatened with expulsion.¹⁰² Then, following orders from Pretoria, Mhlambiso, NUSAS vice-president and ANC activist, was expelled from the college for insubordination in early 1961 despite the intervention of the Fort Hare Senate¹⁰³ and an attempted but ineffectual weak demonstration mounted by frightened and intimidated students.¹⁰⁴

For NUSAS, the 'tea-party' campaign was a qualified success. In the opinion of Shingler, it lacked some legitimacy because of the absence of the SRC presidents, was not sufficiently organised, its goals were not properly spelt out and there was insufficient clarity on what would actually be done on the campus. Shingler believed that the campaign had raised NUSAS's profile with the Fort Hare student body and amongst black students generally.¹⁰⁵ This view is shared by Winston Nagan, a Fort Hare student during this period who argued that with the banning of the liberation movements, Fort Hare students and particularly those who were members of the 'Fort Hare resistance' (not spelt out by Nagan, though Masondo refers to 'the Group of Seven') valued the association with NUSAS as it 'allowed them to reconnect with forces committed to the broader struggle against apartheid'.¹⁰⁶ Working with the Fort Hare resistance pushed NUSAS into closer contact with the liberation movements. This was inevitable in any case because NUSAS activists at Fort Hare were almost always, and then first and foremost, ANCYL activists. While overseas, Shingler was to report on events at Fort Hare to the newly exiled Oliver Tambo whom he met at a conference. At the other end of the spectrum, Shingler believed that the Fort Hare 'tea-party' had probably further alienated conservative whites as well as the security police and the cabinet, confirming their suspicions that NUSAS was an agitator organisation of 'fellow travelers'.¹⁰⁷ Both the NP-supporting *Die Burger* and *Die Oosterlig* held NUSAS responsible for events at Fort Hare.¹⁰⁸

On the basis of the qualified success of the 'tea-party' and the anticipated national security crackdown in the new-year, Shingler decided that NUSAS would hold no demonstrations or confrontations at Fort Hare in 1961. This was evidently not the view of Leftwich, the incoming 1961 president who planned to keep Fort Hare on the boil and confront university apartheid directly. With the state of emergency operating in the Transkei, and Fort Hare resembling a mini-

¹⁰¹ *Cape Times*, 24.9.1960; *New Age*, 6.10.1960.

¹⁰² BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1960, p. 18.

¹⁰³ BC 586 M1, T. Mhlambiso to B. Moore, 21.2.1961; Letter from Thami Mhlambiso, nd., *New Age*, 2.3.1961; *Rhodeo* vol. 15 no. 2, 27.5.1961.

¹⁰⁴ BC 586 M1, 'Fort Hare Report: August 1960–July 1961', pp. 5-6.

¹⁰⁵ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Hugh Lewin, 21.9.1960.

¹⁰⁶ Winston Nagan, 'Truth, reconciliation and the fragility of heroic activism', *Global Jurists Advances* vol. 5 no. 1, article 2, 2005, p. 8.

¹⁰⁷ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Hugh Lewin, 21.9.1960.

¹⁰⁸ *Die Oosterlig*, 14.9.1960; *Die Burger*, 16.9.1960 cited and quoted in *NUSAS Newsletter* no. 24, 27.3.1961.

police state with informers,¹⁰⁹ search-lights¹¹⁰ and constant police surveillance, together with the suspected tampering of NUSAS mail, this had to be done clandestinely. NUSAS correspondence used code names for people and activities and safe addresses to avoid security branch detection. Meetings between Rhodes NUSAS activists and their Fort Hare counterparts were under the guise of Toc H¹¹¹ (a Christian men's movement established in the UK in the 1920s) while NUSAS operatives secretly met Fort Hare student leaders outside the campus or lay low on the rugby field until detected by the police floodlights.

The 1961 campaign was dubbed 'the jazz concert' with various operatives assigned different musical instruments to drown out 'the classics', the state.¹¹² From what can be gauged from the correspondence, the overture to the 'grand closing concert' would be a reception on the Fort Hare campus for Z.K. Matthews, newly elected NUSAS honorary vice-president.¹¹³ This would be jointly hosted by NUSAS and the Fort Hare Alumni Association¹¹⁴ during March/April 1961,¹¹⁵ the date also of the anticipated Sharpeville commemoration. This reception would presumably be the catalyst needed to ignite the intimidated and apathetic student body to radical action. However, this plan was hobbled in a number of ways and was thus abandoned. Firstly, Matthews was reluctant to be used in such a potentially provocative fashion¹¹⁶ and moreover believed that it would impact negatively on NUSAS.¹¹⁷ Secondly, the whole reception was turned into a damp squib when the Fort Hare student leadership made the tactical error of requesting Ross's permission to collect money for Matthews and then being allowed to present it to him at his home and not on the campus as originally intended.¹¹⁸

During a secret meeting in the Fort Hare countryside which entailed giving the security police the slip, NUSAS and Fort Hare activists hatched a second plan.¹¹⁹ Leading 'jazzmen' would make themselves available for election to an SRC based on Ross's flawed and rejected new constitution. Once elected, they would engineer a crisis based on the loss of student rights. This crisis, it was hoped, would activate the intimidated student body into taking militant action, which would then link up with the All-In Conference's anti-Republican and national convention stay-away at the end of May 1961.¹²⁰ Fort Hare students had earlier refused to elect an SRC based on the new constitution because this implied acceptance of tribal college status and could lead to the

¹⁰⁹ T. Beard, *Leadership* vol. 9 no. 10, December/January 1990, p. 35.

¹¹⁰ *Dome*, 27.8.1962.

¹¹¹ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Hugh (Lewin) and Laurie (Geffen), 8.3.1961.

¹¹² BC 586 M1, 'Smith' at 'White Cottage' (?) A. Leftwich to 'My Dear Friend', nd. File M1 for December 1960 to August 1961 has many examples of this terminology.

¹¹³ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1960, p. 18.

¹¹⁴ BC 586 BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Hugh (Lewin) and Laurie (Geffen), 8.3.1961.

¹¹⁵ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1960, p. 18.

¹¹⁶ BC 586 M1, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 20.4.1961.

¹¹⁷ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1961, p. 53.

¹¹⁸ BC 586 M1, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 20.4.1961.

¹¹⁹ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 27.4.1961.

¹²⁰ BC 586 M1, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 20.4.1961.

victimisation of SRC members.¹²¹ However, the dangerous possibility that the group of students arranging social functions on the campus might be persuaded by Ross to form an SRC called for a revision of the earlier principled non-collaboration stand. NUSAS would not give advice on the merits of the 'SRC-election-crisis-engineering' plan because of the dangers involved to those participating but did pledge its support for any action that the students might take. It also offered to help procure alternative university placements in the event of the plan being implemented and the leadership being expelled. Before any final decision was taken, the organisers were expected to consult the ANCYL as well as 'certain people in PE',¹²² presumably Govan Mbeki. In the event, this SRC plan was overtaken by the crisis ensuing from the meeting on the campus of Fort Hare's new Advisory Council on 13 April 1961.

Following a complaint by Kaiser Matanzima, a member of the Advisory Council and head of the Transkei Bantu Authorities, that Stanley Mabizela had called him a 'polecat', Ross summarily expelled Mabizela. Mabizela denied this accusation but informed Ross that he had had a heated argument with Saul Mabude,¹²³ about his collaboration with Bantu Authorities and his refusal to explain to a student mass meeting his membership of the Advisory Council. In the process Mabizela had called Mabude a 'sellout'. Ross alleged that any criticism of government policy was insubordination and thus warranted expulsion. Following an illegal mass meeting convened by Choabi and Martin (Chris) Hani, the student body stormed *en masse* into Ross's office demanding the immediate non-negotiable reversal of the expulsion order as it was an abrogation of fundamental human rights. Ross refused to consider this and the students embarked on an all-encompassing strike, calling even on the workers to down tools.¹²⁴ The black academic staff pleaded with Ross to rescind the order and he eventually agreed on condition that Mabizela send a letter of apology to Matanzima. The NUSAS president, among others, suggested he do this as it would be 'suicidal' to be expelled and would probably lead to the expulsion of other activists (Mhlambiso) too.¹²⁵ The real 'culprit' was in fact Griffiths Mxenge, then considered an ANC 'lightweight'¹²⁶ (later a leader of the NUSAS branch and brutally murdered by the apartheid regime¹²⁷) for whom, Mabizela surmised, the student body was unlikely to rally. By taking the blame, Mabizela was able to provoke the student body to the desired radical action. It was believed that Mabizela's expulsion had been engineered by the Fort Hare authorities and their

¹²¹ BC 586 M1, 'Fort Hare Report: August 1960–July 1961', p. 6.

¹²² BC 586 M1, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 20.4.1961.

¹²³ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-183.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*; BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1961, p. 61; M1, 'Fort Hare Report: August 1960-July 1961'.

¹²⁵ BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie (Geffen) and Hugh (Lewin), 12.5.1961.

¹²⁶ 'Stanley Mabizela April 19, 1999 Cape Town Interview by Danny Massey', p. 3,

www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpages/DC/oral19990419 accessed

¹²⁷ 'Griffiths Mxenge is murdered', <http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/griffiths-mxenge-murdered> accessed 6.12.2012.

humiliating failure in achieving this, provoked them into taking harsh action against the anti-Republic stay-away which occurred a few weeks later.¹²⁸

Amidst a massive security police clampdown nationally and on the campus in the run-up to the declaration of the Republic, the Fort Hare student body again prevailed on the college workers to down tools while they themselves embarked on a hundred percent three day boycott of classes. The police swooped onto the campus, the college was closed and all the students sent home.¹²⁹ (See chapter six.) For those working towards the failure of the ethnic colleges, this was a moral victory, and for the government, which was trying to mitigate this by broadcasting propaganda on the SABC, a monumental failure.¹³⁰ For NUSAS, this was the militant action that it had sought to provoke. The extreme response of the Fort Hare authorities to the boycott was used by NUSAS to drum up further publicity against the inadequacies of university apartheid. All NUSAS-affiliated SRCs and academic freedom committees were requested to take a stand on the Fort Hare issue.¹³¹ As discussed in chapter six, Rhodes responded magnificently with its own sympathy stay-away,¹³² but as also noted, much of this militancy was stimulated by anti-Republicanism rather than a rejection of apartheid. The UCT SRC issued a statement 'deploring the closing of the college' which it argued, 'was glaring evidence of the failure of the government's policy of university apartheid'.¹³³ UNNE's denounced the suppression of the rights of students to participate in the affairs of the country.¹³⁴ In weighing up the success of the response to the closure, Adrian Leftwich concluded that a victory had not been won as the SRCs had not come up as strongly as anticipated.¹³⁵ Because of the security situation pertaining during the inauguration of the Republic, protest meetings about Fort Hare were banned too.¹³⁶ There was, in addition, a tremendous fear that the extraordinarily brave actions of the Fort Hare student leadership would lead to reprisal and mass expulsions.

When Fort Hare re-opened in July 1961, everyone was allowed to return, much to NUSAS's surprise. Moreover, the authorities adopted a surprisingly conciliatory attitude towards the student body, evidently in a desperate attempt to stabilise and normalise the situation. However, three students were interrogated by the police regarding their role in the anti-Republican strike at

¹²⁸ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, pp. 181, 184.

¹²⁹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1961, p. 61; M1, Adrian Leftwich to 'News Edition', 2.6.1961; D. Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

¹³⁰ Michael Polansky to *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 13 no. 10, 23.6.1961; BC 586 A2.2, Laurie Geffen to Hugh Lewin, 6.6.1961, p. 6.

¹³¹ BC 586 M1, Adrian Leftwich to Students' Representative Councils and Academic Freedom Committees, 5.6.1961.

¹³² *ibid.*

¹³³ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1961, p. 62.

¹³⁴ BC 586 M4.1, 'Minutes of the SRC meeting held on Wednesday, 14th June 1961, in the SRC office, M.B., at 7.45 p.m.'

¹³⁵ BC 586 M4.1, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 14.6.1961.

¹³⁶ BC 586 M1, Adrian Leftwich to Students' Representative Councils and Academic Freedom Committees, 5.6.1961.

Lovedale and eventually the entire Fort Hare student body (to its aghast and aggrieved indignation) was held responsible for the events which had led to the closure of the high school on two occasions.¹³⁷

Bantu Education was a key component of government policy and one of its aims was to impose control over the youth. By 1961 Bantu Education was in turmoil, particularly in the Transkei where Govan Mbeki believed it was failing. Teachers were reluctant to impose discipline and traditional leaders refused the government's plea that they step in to restore order.¹³⁸ Moreover, school children responded enthusiastically to the All-In Conference's call for the anti-Republican stay-away¹³⁹ while the Pondoland revolt rejected not only Bantu Authorities but Bantu Education too. It is thus not surprising that the state acted harshly against any Fort Hare students who actively opposed and fanned opposition to these measures as, for example, in the separate cases of Mabizela and Bantu Authorities and Lovedale's closure.

Provoking opposition to university apartheid and NUSAS's banning on the campus was still NUSAS's aim after Fort Hare re-opened in July 1961. The Z.K. Matthews reception was reinstated as its vehicle even though Matthews was still reluctant to be part of something which could impact negatively on NUSAS.¹⁴⁰ The party, at Lovedale Theological College, was attended by most of the NUSAS executive, NUSAS activists at Rhodes, part of the Fort Hare student body, alumni and old staff, as well as the security police, the latter uninvited and peering in through the windows.¹⁴¹ The mass meeting, the main purpose of the reception,¹⁴² passed a resolution of no-confidence in the tribal college rectors and called on them to resign, but this was subsequently withdrawn by the fearful and intimidated student body.¹⁴³

Despite this apparent fear and apathy on the part of the student body, Fort Hare insiders optimistically believed that 'the walls' of apartheid education were 'cracking' and in a desperate attempt to retain the viability of the numerically shrinking Xhosa college, the rector was granting many concessions.¹⁴⁴ On the basis of this information, NUSAS decided that 1962 should be the year of defying Ross's banning of NUSAS and that a 'solid front of opposition must be shown' by all the affiliated centres. No particular plan of action was finalised but it was tentatively suggested that NUSAS invade the campus and create an issue at a mass meeting. This would then be taken

¹³⁷ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1961, Annexure, p. 7.

¹³⁸ G. Mbeki, 'Bantu Education in Danger', *New Age* 17.8.1961.

¹³⁹ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1961*, pp. 238-241.

¹⁴⁰ BC 586 A2.2, Ros (Traub) to Thami Mhlambiso, 21.8.1961; Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 28.8.1961; A2.1, 'RJ' (?) Roger Jowel to Adrian Leftwich, 18.8.1961.

¹⁴¹ BC 586 B1 Vice-President's Report 1962, p. 1; B3 Executive Minutes 1961, 'Strictly Confidential Minutes of 12-13 December 1961'; B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 13.9.1961; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 13 no. 16, 15.9.1961.

¹⁴² BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 28.8.1961; M1, Stanley Mabizela to 'Friend' (?) Adrian Leftwich, 14.8.1961; Roger Jowell to Neil Callie, 24.8.1961.

¹⁴³ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1961, 'Strictly Confidential Minutes of 12-13 December 1961', Annexure 1, pp. 7-8.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 8.

to Ross. Some NUSAS leaders were sensitive to the accusations which came from both the government and some sections of the Fort Hare student body that it was an agitator organisation which just came to the campus to export revolution and thus insisted that the initiative should be taken by the Fort Hare students themselves.¹⁴⁵

Apart from the fact that NUSAS was banned at Fort Hare, it faced a number of obstacles in implementing its plan. Firstly, the student body was deeply divided and wracked with conflict.¹⁴⁶ Generational change and government policy had substantially altered the nature of the student body by 1962. Many new students were reasonably happy with college life, were depoliticised and ignorant of both NUSAS and other organisations and thus unwilling to embark on militant action. In other words, they were set to become the docile student body dreamed of by the university authorities.¹⁴⁷ In the absence of an SRC, some of these new students had, to Ross's delight, taken it upon themselves the task of organising campus social activities.¹⁴⁸ A significant number of mainly pre-1960 students remained implacably opposed to anything approaching collaboration¹⁴⁹ and thus, with the strong support of NUSAS, decided to disrupt the collaborating student committee and its cosy relationship with the rector.¹⁵⁰ In addition, throughout 1961 and 1962, the college authorities experienced passive resistance aimed at making the system unworkable.¹⁵¹ Students coughed rudely when Ross spoke, boycotted church services, which had become indoctrination sessions,¹⁵² and even threw stones at the cinema. Some of the non-collaborators still favoured the revival of the SRC under Ross's flawed constitution so as to provide leadership to the bickering and intimidated student body and also to preserve the character of the pre-1960 Fort Hare.¹⁵³ Nothing however came of this and instead militant student leaders turned to the banned liberation movements for direction.¹⁵⁴

During the second half of 1961, when the ANC was preparing itself for sabotage, a parallel development occurred at Fort Hare. A radical anti-collaboration body came into existence at the college with the aim of 'prevent[ing] Fort Hare being turned into a tribal college in spirit' and 'restor[ing]...the solidarity that [had] existed in the past'.¹⁵⁵ This organisation, the *Force Publique* was presumably named after the Congolese colonial army which had mutinied against its white

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 18.4.1962.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 11.2.1962; 12.3.1962; 18.4.1962; Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 19.3.1962.

¹⁴⁸ BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 12.3.1962; 18.4.1962; Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 19.3.1962.

¹⁴⁹ BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 12.3.1962; D. Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 179; J. Smith and B. Tramp, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

¹⁵⁰ BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 19.3.1962.

¹⁵¹ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

¹⁵² BC 586 M1, Stanley Mabizela to Adrian Leftwich, 14.3.1961.

¹⁵³ BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 9.11.1961; B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 8.11.1961, pp. 6-7.

¹⁵⁴ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 179.

officers at the time of independence. This naming perhaps signified the inspirational nature of the Congolese struggle for national liberation for Fort Hare students as well as the parallels students discerned between their own situation with the Fort Hare authorities and those of the oppressed but fighting Congolese. At the same time as the establishment of the *Force Publique*, the underground cell system, the M-Plan, initiated by Mandela in the early 1950's in anticipation of the ANC's banning, was adopted at Fort Hare too.¹⁵⁶ It was allegedly through the *Force Publique* that the M-Plan was introduced.¹⁵⁷ This impacted on NUSAS too. As radical student politics moved underground, there was no longer any open discussion or any organised body to provide leadership to the mass of Fort Hare students¹⁵⁸ and so implement NUSAS's plan of action for 1962. Moreover, by 1962 many of the older generation of students were so disillusioned with tribal college life that they were aiming at graduating and getting out of Fort Hare as soon as possible,¹⁵⁹ while some ANC activists were preparing to go into exile. All of these factors exacerbated the ANC and NUSAS leadership vacuum developing at Fort Hare. On the other hand, the fact that Fort Hare NUSAS activists were primarily ANC activists who channeled their energies into underground ANC work¹⁶⁰ could only have had a radicalising effect on NUSAS policy. It was NUSAS's experience at Fort Hare, and also the University of the North (discussed later), that influenced the decision of the 1962 congress to put into practice the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and adopt a more militant activist policy.

NUSAS's militant action planned for Fort Hare in 1962 hit other obstacles too. From late 1961, Fort Hare students displayed 'antagonistic apathy' towards NUSAS.¹⁶¹ Some were disillusioned because despite militant action, university apartheid remained in place.¹⁶² Others were too frightened and intimidated to be associated with an organisation proscribed on the campus which many believed did nothing other than 'import revolutions' to the campus.¹⁶³ Very few students attended the NUSAS meeting convened after the Fort Hare graduation in Grahamstown while Mhlambiso, the NUSAS vice-president then based at UNNE, was advised of the futility of visiting the Fort Hare campus as NUSAS was dead there and all its structures had collapsed.¹⁶⁴ On the basis of this and other information procured from those in the know at the college, Mhlambiso concluded that were Fort Hare students 'still prepared to put up a fight', it would not be for

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 185.

¹⁵⁷ J. Smith and B. Tramp, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

¹⁵⁸ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

¹⁵⁹ BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 18.4.1962.

¹⁶⁰ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 187. For example, during 1962, Mhlambiso addressed meetings of the South African Congress of Trade Unions and gatherings organised to oppose the Coloured Transfer Bill. He and Mabizela were stopped by the police and had ANC documents in their possession confiscated. BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 12.3.1962; 18.4.1962.

¹⁶¹ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 11.6.1962.

¹⁶² BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 29.4.1962.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, 5.6.1962.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 18.4.1962; BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 11.6.1962.

NUSAS.¹⁶⁵ Mhlambiso observed too that much opposition and apathy was displayed towards organisations other than NUSAS too,¹⁶⁶ including the ANC and its newly established student organisation, the African Students' Association (discussed later in this chapter) the latter which visited Fort Hare in May 1962.¹⁶⁷ NUSAS decided that it would still maintain contact with Fort Hare and champion its struggles even though it had lost the support of the student body.¹⁶⁸

Early in July 1962, NUSAS officials visited Fort Hare and managed to revitalise the national union on the campus.¹⁶⁹ However, the level of this support was soon tested with the second visit to the campus of the Unity Movement's Cape Peninsula Students' Union (CPSU)¹⁷⁰ propagating its new radical student organisation, the Progressive National Students' Organisation (PNSO). Probably having a bearing on the creation of PSNO, was the formation of the African Peoples' Democratic Union of South Africa (APDUSA) in 1961. This was a semi-clandestine, though mass-based revolutionary socialist liberation movement affiliated to the NEUM, which had flowed out of a post-Sharpeville initiative of the Western Cape branch of SOYA. APDUSA won a significant following in Eastern Mpondoland and in Sekhukhuneland as well as the support of the Durban Student Union.¹⁷¹ It can be assumed then that PSNO was associated with APDUSA too.

Adherents of PSNO attacked NUSAS bitterly in both 1961 and 1962, claiming that it was funded by the Chamber of Mines and was the student wing of an unnamed political party,¹⁷² probably the LP. NUSAS was deeply concerned about this turn of events and left no stone unturned in its fight to retain Fort Hare's affiliation. Shortly after the conclusion of the landmark 1962 NUSAS congress, Leftwich and Basil Moore, president and president-elect respectively, returned to Fort Hare and laid out NUSAS's newly adopted radical activist policy. Despite a very long and heated meeting during which Fort Hare students told NUSAS officials that they did not trust them and that as a white organisation NUSAS could not really understand African concerns,¹⁷³ Leftwich concluded (surprisingly) that NUSAS was held in very high esteem at the college. However, to retain this status, it would have to implement its new activist policy otherwise it would quite justifiably be guilty of making empty pious statements.¹⁷⁴ Fort Hare adherents of PSNO accused

¹⁶⁵ BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 18.4.1962.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 5.6.1962.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 26.6.1962.

¹⁶⁸ BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 8.5.1962.

¹⁶⁹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, 'Fort Hare Report July-December 1962', p. 1.

¹⁷⁰ One of the visitors was Archie Mafeje, a Master's student in Anthropology at UCT. BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, 'Fort Hare Report July-December 1962', p. 1. NUSAS would later protest vehemently against the decision of the UCT authorities to bow to government pressure and revoke the appointment of Mafeje to a senior lectureship in Anthropology at the university. This will be discussed in chapter ten.

¹⁷¹ R. Kayser and M. Adhikari, *op. cit.*, pp. 321, 324-325, 328, 333-334.

¹⁷² BC 586 B1 Vice-President's Report 1962, pp. 1-2; Presidential Report 1963, 'Fort Hare Report July-December 1962', p. 1; B3 Executive Minutes 1961, Annexure 1, 'Strictly Confidential', p. 7; B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 13.9.1961; 4.10.1961, p. 4.

¹⁷³ *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 9, 15.8.1962.

¹⁷⁴ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Derek Bostock, 15.8.1962, p. 4.

NUSAS of stealing PSNO's policy¹⁷⁵ and subsequently engineered the student body's disaffiliation from NUSAS in August 1962.¹⁷⁶ A follow-up mass meeting to overturn this decision had to be abandoned following its disruption by PSNO supporters and the possibility of violence breaking out. Ultimately a petition reaffirmed Fort Hare's affiliation to NUSAS,¹⁷⁷ much to the national union's relief. NUSAS had feared that Fort Hare's alignment with the racially exclusive, anti-NUSAS and anti-collaborationist PSNO would play directly into the government's hands. Moreover, NEUM members were traditionally armchair politicians who eschewed all political activity (though APDUSA broke this mould) and thus a majority of PSNO adherents at Fort Hare would ensure that the student body became the politically docile entity so longed for by the college's apartheid authorities.¹⁷⁸ It was quite possible given the level of security police activity and spying at Fort Hare that became evident after the arrests of 1963-4¹⁷⁹ (discussed later) that the authorities had infiltrated PSNO too, so as to sow dissension on the campus and thereby weaken all political forces.

Rooting out all radical political opposition was the aim of the South African government when it embarked on a massive nation-wide security crackdown from June 1963. This was in the wake of the PAC's campaign to liberate South Africa in 1963, the ANC's sabotage campaign, as well as potential resistance to and disruption of Transkei's imminent self-government. Armed with the Suppression of Communism, Unlawful Organisations and General Law Amendment Acts, as well as a phalanx of newly recruited informers,¹⁸⁰ thousands of people were detained, for up to one hundred and eighty days often enduring interrogation under torture. Many were released without facing any charges, but were often subsequently banned under the Suppression of Communism Act. Others were charged with and usually convicted of a number of offences, the most common being membership of and pursuing the goals of a banned political organisation¹⁸¹ and, as in the case of the Rivonia trial of *Umkhonto we Sizwe's* high command, sabotage.

Between 1962 and 1965, fifteen Fort Hare students were convicted of sabotage and of being members of either the ANC or the PAC, while many more (eighteen in 1964 alone)¹⁸² were detained for varying lengths of time and for varying reasons, including being members of NUSAS.

¹⁷⁵ B1 Presidential Report 1962, 'Fort Hare Report July-December 1962', p. 1

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*; *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 12, 5.9.1962; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 20, 14.9.1962.

¹⁷⁷ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1962, 'Fort Hare Report July-December 1962', p. 1; *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 12, 5.9.1962; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 20, 14.9.1962.

¹⁷⁸ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 13.9.1961; Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 4.10.1961, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷⁹ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

¹⁸⁰ The Minister of Bantu Education admitted that students were paid to spy on their compatriots. *Rhodeo* vol. 17 no. 11, 6.6.1963.

¹⁸¹ B. Magubane, P. Bonner, J. Sithole, P. Delius, J. Cherry, P. Gibbs and T. April, 'The turn to armed struggle', South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 1, 1960-1970, op. cit.*, p. 130.

¹⁸² BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1966, 'National Union of South African Students: Police Activity on the Campus'.

The first casualty was Rex Lupondwana, a first year student, who with the permission of the leader of the ANC's Victoria East Sabotage Unit, Andrew Masondo, a Mathematics lecturer at Fort Hare, was found guilty of petrol bombing the house of his police informer and Lovedale teacher. His accomplice and Fort Hare room-mate, Viwe Rhelu, was not arrested at the time¹⁸³ but was refused readmission to Fort Hare in 1963. Fort Hare students were permitted by Ross to provide food for Lupondwana in prison, but Ross warned the students that he was aware of NUSAS activity on campus, which the students defiantly confirmed. It would seem that NUSAS paid for Lupondwana's legal defense.¹⁸⁴ The 1963 NUSAS congress initiated a 'Political Freedom Fund' under the auspices of its 'Academic Freedom Committee', which would provide legal and material assistance to detainees and their dependents.¹⁸⁵

In March 1963, Andrew Masondo and three Fort Hare student members of his Sabotage Unit were arrested for sawing down an electricity node and plunging the surrounding area, including Fort Hare, into darkness.¹⁸⁶ Police, 'armed to the teeth' swooped onto the campus to arrest the three students, much to the distress of the traumatised student body who cancelled their freshers' ball in sympathy with their colleagues undergoing 'third degree'.¹⁸⁷ Angry that the authorities had not protected the students, the student body marched on the rector's office to demand the rectification of their grievances. The authorities continued to collaborate with the police. Shortly after this, two students were arrested on the campus by the police and the assistant registrar and were charged with being members of a banned organisation.¹⁸⁸ Ross became difficult too and refused to allow the student body to raise funds for Masondo's wife and their five children. Ultimately Masondo was sentenced to twelve years hard labour on Robben Island while his student accomplices received eight and nine years respectively.¹⁸⁹

It was long prison sentences like these imposed on students, which led to the establishment of NUSAS's 'Prison Education Scheme'. This initiative flowed out of SACHED and enabled students to continue their studies while in prison, NUSAS sourcing the funding for fees and books from overseas student unions. Bizarrely, given the brutal and sadistic manner in which political prisoners were often treated, the prison authorities permitted the operation of this scheme but insisted that all letters would be censored. In the midst of the Rivonia Trial, Bram Fischer, the counsel for the accused and by then the most senior SACP/MK operative still at large, expecting that his clients like Nelson Mandela would receive life sentences (if they escaped the death penalty) approached Maeder Osler, NUSAS vice-president, about extending NUSAS's Prison

¹⁸³ B. Magubane *et al*, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

¹⁸⁴ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, 'Fort Hare Report, July to December 1962; 1963'.

¹⁸⁵ BC 586 B1, Eldred Tabachnik, 'Press Release: Assistance for Detained Students' 1963; *Nux*, 16.8.1963.

¹⁸⁶ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 188; B. Magubane *et al*, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-130.

¹⁸⁷ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, 'Fort Hare Report, July to December 1962; 1963'.

¹⁸⁸ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, 'Fort Hare Report, 1963', p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, p. 58; B. Magubane *et al*, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-130.

Education Scheme to non-students. To this NUSAS agreed and enlisted the services of Imperial Correspondence School and the University of London to effect this.¹⁹⁰ Over the following twenty six years, as attested to by Nelson Mandela, the scheme assisted many scores of political prisoners and later ordinary ones too in furthering their education.¹⁹¹ One of its first beneficiaries was Rivonia trialist, Andrew Mlangeni, confined on Robben Island¹⁹² with Andrew Masondo.

Masondo was arrested one month prior to his planned assassination of the hated Kaiser Matanzima, Pretoria's Bantu Authorities henchman. Matanzima, together with M. De Wet Nel, Minister of Bantu Education, was to be the guest of honour at apartheid Fort Hare's first graduation ceremony under the auspices of its new examining body, UNISA, in April 1963.¹⁹³ This graduation occurred against the background not only of a national security crackdown, but also the changing status of the Transkei, which potentially had a bearing on Fort Hare's future too. In January 1963, the Transkei Constitution Bill, which was the enabling legislation for Transkeian self-government, was, after a long delay, introduced in the South African parliament. The delay was caused first of all by opposition to self-government within the NP,¹⁹⁴ as well as, to the dismay of the government, to the surprising rejection of the Pretoria-drafted apartheid constitution by the majority of traditional leaders in the Transkei and Ciskei Territorial Authority who favoured a non-racial dispensation. Pretoria left it to Kaiser Matanzima to railroad the unpopular draft constitution through the various tribal bodies.¹⁹⁵ As far as Fort Hare was concerned, rumours had been in circulation since 1959 that the college, which was deemed to be situated in a white group area, was to be relocated to the Transkei. In addition, its imposing infrastructure would be transformed into the headquarters of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development from where the apartheid authorities could keep a watchful eye over the self-governing Transkei and the African territories of the Eastern Cape.¹⁹⁶ However, evidently afraid of the consequences of transferring the as yet not fully subdued Fort Hare student body to the uncertain and untested control of the Transkei, the South African government abandoned this plan in May 1963.¹⁹⁷

In April 1963, coinciding with the Fort Hare graduation, Verwoerd announced that elections to the Transkeian parliament would take place that year too. It was not surprising then that Fort Hare students voted to boycott the 1963 graduation because their attendance at the event would have

¹⁹⁰ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014. After an unsuccessful attempt by the SACP (which did not involve Fischer) to wrest the scheme away from NUSAS, it was transferred to Ruth Hayman, a banned unflinching human rights lawyer (including for NUSAS) and restructured like SACHED as an independent entity and administered by David Adler, NUSAS's former international vice-president and Sheila Barsel, NUSAS's general secretary, the latter also, unknown to Osler, a member of the SACP. Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

¹⁹¹ N. Mandela, *Long walk to freedom: the autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, Macdonald Purnell, Randburg, 1995, pp. 398-399.

¹⁹² Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

¹⁹³ B. Magubane, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-125.

¹⁹⁴ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1963*, p. 1.

¹⁹⁵ G. Mbeki, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-139.

¹⁹⁶ *New Age*, 11.5.1961; D. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 484.

¹⁹⁷ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, p. 59.

lent an air of legitimacy to university apartheid and tribalism. In an effort to prevent what was threatening to become a public relations embarrassment to the ethnic university, Ross compelled students to apply for tickets to the occasion. However, this attempt at intimidation and threat of victimisation of those who did not attend was not successful as the student boycott was total.¹⁹⁸ Graduation boycotts would become a recurring event in Fort Hare's subsequent history and at other tribal colleges too. The 1964 Fort Hare graduation boycott¹⁹⁹ was largely the handiwork of NUSAS activists and generated much anger against the student body and NUSAS by the humiliated Fort Hare staff. NUSAS activists were subsequently placed under close observation.²⁰⁰

From late 1963 onwards, NUSAS at Fort Hare and black students in NUSAS generally, became the target of government reprisals.²⁰¹ In the context of the general security crackdown aimed at paralyzing the liberation movements, the government evidently suspected that NUSAS activists were in fact ANC activists. This suspicion was borne out in many cases as a number of ANC cadres, including the 1963 NUSAS Local Committee chairperson, Nagan, were able to use their NUSAS positions as a cover for their illegal ANC activities.²⁰² However, targeting black NUSAS members also coincided with a clampdown on Eastern Cape LP activists (like the banning of Rhodes Philosophy lecturer, Terrence Beard, who was dismissed from Fort Hare in 1959), who were campaigning with the Democratic Party of Victor Poto for a non-racial Transkei during the Transkeian elections of November 1963.²⁰³ In two separate incidents at the end of 1963, two Fort Hare students – one returning from a NUSAS regional seminar - were detained by the security police and interrogated under torture on a variety of subjects including the activities and membership of NUSAS.²⁰⁴ In August 1964, four Fort Hare NUSAS leaders were detained following their public denunciation of detention without trial, including that of NUSAS president, Jonty Driver²⁰⁵ (discussed in chapter nine). The four 'moderates'²⁰⁶ included Choabi, a 'brilliant' master's student and former SRC president, Sam Nolutshungu, the chairperson of the Local NUSAS Committee and leading NCFCS member, later appointed vice-chancellor of Wits and Stephen Gawe vice-president of the Anglican Students Federation and son of the ANC's

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁹⁹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 47; M1, 'Willy' (?) William Aserange to Jonty (Driver), 16.4.1964.

²⁰⁰ BC 586 B1, Secretary Fort Hare, 'National Union of South African Students 40th Annual Congress, 1964: Report of the Fort Hare Local Committee', p. 2.

²⁰¹ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1963, 'Anon', 'Further Report on Fort Hare', 4.12.1963; B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 26; *Witwatersrand Student*, 3.4.1964; *Nux* no. 10, 17.9.1964.

²⁰² W. Nagan, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

²⁰³ R. Vigne, *Liberals against apartheid, op. cit.*, pp. 176-180

²⁰⁴ BC 586 B1, Secretary Fort Hare, 'National Union of South African Students 40th Annual Congress, 1964: Report of the Fort Hare Local Committee', p. 2; Presidential Report 1964, p. 26; Gill Gane, 'National Union of South African Students 40th Student Assembly Meeting, July 1964: Report of the Regional Secretary for the Eastern Cape', p. 2; B3 Executive Minutes 1963, 'Fort Hare Report', 14.11.1963.

²⁰⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, pp. 45-46; M4.1, Maeder Osler to Mewa Ramgobin, 28.10.1964; O1.1, 'Sproule' to Maeder Osler, 30.8.1964.

²⁰⁶ *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 16, 3.9.1964.

chaplain-general.²⁰⁷ Though they were eventually convicted of furthering the aims of the ANC²⁰⁸ - Andrew Masondo was brought back from Robben Island to stand trial with them and others like Mabizela²⁰⁹ - in the students' eyes, this was proof that being part of NUSAS was too dangerous to risk.²¹⁰ This perception was probably further reinforced following another two incidents. The Local Committee chairperson was arrested for 'obstructing the ends of justice'²¹¹ while Mhlambiso was banned under the Suppression of Communism Act, largely for his NUSAS activities according to NUSAS president, Driver.²¹²

By mid-1964, NUSAS was still popular and operational at Fort Hare but was in a state of slow terminal decline. Many students were too afraid to associate themselves with the organisation²¹³ or were successfully indoctrinated by Bantu Education and thus bowed to the authority's hostility to the national union.²¹⁴ Moreover, much of NUSAS's leadership²¹⁵ (and that of the ANC's too) had left the university, mostly because they had graduated, but some because they were in prison or had secretly left the country to join the underground organisations in exile.²¹⁶ With the massive infiltration of informers at a national level and at Fort Hare too from 1963 onwards,²¹⁷ NUSAS moved underground and adopted what was effectively the ANC's M-Plan. Students were recruited individually to cells of between six and seven members and would meet secretly to discuss typical NUSAS concerns such as human rights and academic freedom.²¹⁸

Fort Hare students were active consumers of NUSAS benefits such as the Loan Fund and the discount booklets and, of course, the newly established Political Freedom Fund, renamed the

²⁰⁷ BC 586 M4.1, Maeder Osler to Mewa Ramgobin, 28.10.1964; *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 17, 11.9.1964; *Nux* no. 10, 17.9.1964; A. Egan, *The politics of a South African Catholic student movement, 1960-1987*, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, 1991, pp. 29-30; C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', Unpublished memoir, p. 3.

²⁰⁸ BC 586 A2.2, Maeder Osler to 'Clive', 9.11.1964; B1, Fort Hare Local Committee Chairman, 'National Union of South African Students: 1965 Student Assembly at UCT: Report of the Fort Hare Branch'; Presidential Report 1966, 'National Union of South African Students: Police Activity on the Campus'; M1, Jonty Driver President-1963-1964 National Union of South African Students, 'Testimonial', 10.1.1964.

²⁰⁹ South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa: South Africans telling their stories volume 1*, Mutloadse Arts Heritage Trust, Johannesburg, 2008, p. 260.

²¹⁰ BC 586 M1, Charles van Onselen, 'Northern Cape visit to establish Fort Hare contact', nd., p. 1; Peter Mansfield, 'Fort Hare', March 1965; B1, Fort Hare Local Committee Chairman, 'National Union of South African Students: 1965 Student Assembly at UCT: Report of the Fort Hare Branch'.

²¹¹ BC 586 B1, Fort Hare Local Committee Chairman, 'National Union of South African Students: 1965 Student Assembly at UCT: Report of the Fort Hare Branch'.

²¹² *Witwatersrand Student*, 3.4.1964. In late 1964/early 1965 he was sentenced to one year's imprisonment in Kroonstad Prison. BC 586 B1, Mewa Ramgobin, 'Report of the UNNE SRC to the NUSAS Congress 1965', p. 6.

²¹³ BC 586 B1, Fort Hare Local Committee Chairman, 'National Union of South African Students: 1965 Student Assembly at UCT: Report of the Fort Hare Branch'; M1, Charles van Onselen, 'Northern Cape visit to establish Fort Hare contact', nd., p. 2.

²¹⁴ M1, 'Report on Fort Hare - 1965 (Given to Day of Affirmation Meeting SRCs 1965) read 1.7.1965'.

²¹⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1966, pp. 52-53.

²¹⁶ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, pp. 188,190.

²¹⁷ BC 586 B1, Fort Hare Local Committee Chairman, 'National Union of South African Students: 1965 Student Assembly at UCT: Report of the Fort Hare Branch'; Presidential Report 1966, 'National Union of South African Students: Police Activity on the Campus'; M1, 'Report on Fort Hare - 1965 (Given to Day of Affirmation Meeting SRCs 1965) read 1.7.1965'.

²¹⁸ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, Secretary Fort Hare: 'National Union of South African Students 40th Annual Congress, 1964: Report of the Fort Hare Local Committee'.

more innocuous 'Defense and Aid'. For those wishing to enroll at an overseas university, or needing to flee the country in a hurry, overseas scholarships, administered in South Africa by NUSAS, were available too.²¹⁹ NUSAS had procured these largely through its contacts within the international student movement and at universities abroad. Although NUSAS operated underground, these student benefits were publicly advertised in the student residences with no untoward consequences.²²⁰ This was possibly because Ross had informed NUSAS in 1960 that although Fort Hare students could not be affiliated to the national union, they could utilise its benefits. This situation was tactically unacceptable to NUSAS but nonetheless all of its services remained secretly accessible to Fort Hare students.²²¹ Not surprisingly then, a large proportion of the student body did become individual members of NUSAS although for security purposes no membership lists were compiled during 1963 and 1964.²²²

Resorting to individual enrolment changed the whole nature of Fort Hare's association with NUSAS. This effectively meant that the student body, through its SRC, which did not exist, was no longer affiliated to the national union as in the past. Traditionally NUSAS had pursued strong centre-SRC affiliation but the merits of the weak individual membership system were becoming increasingly discernible to NUSAS in the changed political and security situation. Individual enrolment made for more committed cadres and would put to an end the intermittent, bruising and destabilising bids for disaffiliation of the past. During a secret mass meeting in 1964 attended by the NUSAS president, Jonty Driver, those present affirmed their affiliation to the national union. NUSAS's detractors questioned the legitimacy of this but were informed that this affirmation conveyed the views of NUSAS members only and was not binding on the rest of the student body²²³ nor for that matter, the non-existent SRC. On various occasions after 1962 and again in March 1964, Fort Hare students had considered reinstating the SRC but in each instance had concluded that such a body would be a puppet collaborative institution²²⁴ (an argument which the NUSAS executive dismissed) and more importantly, would result in the victimisation of its officers. Thus the underground NUSAS committee elected by NUSAS members became the *de facto* SRC.²²⁵ In this environment of clandestine activity, no mass meetings under the auspices of NUSAS could be held on the campus²²⁶ but occasionally NUSAS members did meet in the forest outside university property. In March 1964, the NUSAS executive was unable to meet any

²¹⁹ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1963, 'Fort Hare Report', 14.11.1963; B3 Executive Minutes 1964, pp. 26; M1, 'Willy' (?) William Aserange to Ros (Traub), 26.5.1964; B1 Presidential Report 1966, pp. 52-53.

²²⁰ BC 586 B1, Lorna Symington, 'National Union of South African Students 39th Student Assembly, July 1963: Report of the Regional Secretary for the Eastern Cape', p. 2.

²²¹ BC 586 O1.1, John Shingler to Ian McDonald, 21.10.1960.

²²² BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, Secretary Fort Hare, 'National Union of South African Students 40th Annual Congress, 1964: Report of the Fort Hare Local Committee'.

²²³ *ibid.*

²²⁴ BC 586 M1, 'Willy' (?) William Aserange to Jonty (Driver), 16.4.1964.

²²⁵ BC 586 O1.1, Jonty Driver to Mike Bands, 6.3.1964.

²²⁶ BC 586 M1, 'Report on Fort Hare – 1965 (Given to Day of Affirmation Meeting SRCs 1965) read 1.7.1965'.

students during a visit to Alice²²⁷ while in 1965, it was advised not to come at all.²²⁸ Contact between Rhodes NUSAS activists and their Fort Hare counterparts also collapsed.²²⁹ In 1964, Rhodes NUSAS activists ceased visiting Alice because they were afraid that they were being watched and could thus endanger the Fort Hare students seen in their company.²³⁰ Even meetings in Grahamstown came to an abrupt end when the 1963 and 1964 NUSAS Directors for the Eastern Cape, Lorna Symington and Gillian Gane, fell victim to the African Resistance Movement crackdown in July 1964²³¹ (discussed in chapter nine). On three separate occasions in 1963, Templeton Mdalana, a former Fort Hare student and ANC activist employed by NUSAS to pilot its Transkei literacy project, was unable to even set foot in Alice before he was recognised by state security personnel, let alone enter the campus where the security police were almost permanently camped out. Alternative arrangements for retaining contact with Fort Hare were set in motion in 1964 when NUSAS attempted to establish a branch at the seminary adjacent to the university.

In 1963, the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa (Fedsem), was opened in Alice by the Anglican, Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian Churches for the training of black ministers.²³² Both the Anglican and Methodist Churches had had their respective seminaries in Johannesburg and Natal closed by the government under the Group Areas Act, and moreover, along with the Presbyterian Church, had lost control of their residences at Fort Hare after the government takeover in 1960. The government and Fort Hare authorities were ambivalent about granting permission for the establishment of this new independent black college. However, because Fedsem would solve the legal problem of Fort Hare being situated in a white group area and secondly, because the government hoped that the new college would extensively utilise the new Divinity offerings introduced at Fort Hare, Fedsem was allowed to come into existence. However, both the Anglican and Congregational Churches would have nothing to do with Fort Hare whereas the Methodists and Presbyterians planned to cultivate a close relationship with the apartheid institution.²³³ This difference laid the foundation for potential conflict at Fedsem.

The first principal of Fedsem was Aelred Stubbs from the decidedly anti-government Anglican monastic order, the Community of the Resurrection. Although Stubbs was a sympathetic champion of human rights and negotiated with the Fort Hare and state authorities on behalf of the

²²⁷ BC 586 A2.2, Maeder Osler to Jonty Driver, 13.3.1964, p. 2.

²²⁸ BC 586 M1, Peter Mansfield, 'Fort Hare', March 1965; Charles van Onselen, 'Northern Cape visit to establish Fort Hare contact', nd.

²²⁹ BC 586 M1, Charles van Onselen, 'Northern Cape visit to establish Fort Hare contact', nd., p. 1.

²³⁰ BC 586 M1, Jonty Driver to Winston Nagan, 17.2.1964.

²³¹ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1964*, p. 77.

²³² G.A. Duncan, 'Notes on the foundation of the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa', *Verbum et Ecclesia JRG* vol. 27 no. 3, 2006, p. 848.

²³³ *ibid.*, pp. 847-848.

arrested Fort Hare students and the NUSAS Political Freedom Fund,²³⁴ his actions were circumscribed. Firstly, Fedsem did not share a single political vision and secondly, it existed under sufferance of the authorities and had to operate within the harsh environment of Bantu Education and university apartheid. This made any approach by NUSAS to Fedsem regarding Fort Hare students problematic. After a protracted period of delicate negotiations between the Fedsem authorities and NUSAS,²³⁵ undertaken in particular by Charles van Onselen at Rhodes, a NUSAS branch was established at the seminary in 1965 on the condition that it would not be used as a 'launching pad' for Fort Hare.²³⁶ Nonetheless, the existence of a fairly active NUSAS branch at Fedsem²³⁷ and a sympathetic environment in which to operate greatly facilitated NUSAS's difficult relationship with the Fort Hare student body.

By mid-1966, Fort Hare's NUSAS branch had shrunk to only thirty five members. This was due more to fear and apathy stemming from continuing intimidation rather than antagonism to NUSAS's ideas.²³⁸ NUSAS thus established its own new society, presumably along similar lines to the NUSAS fronts set-up at Wits, UCT and Rhodes in the aftermath of Sharpeville, and injected its liberal ideas into existing non-political campus groupings.²³⁹ Not only NUSAS activism, but Fort Hare political activism in general, was, of necessity, diverted to non-political student societies, particularly the religious denominational ones.²⁴⁰ These included the NCFS, the Anglican Students' Association and later the University Christian Movement (UCM). Many of the Fort Hare students arrested in the 1960s were leading members of the Catholic and Anglican student movements.²⁴¹ As mentioned earlier, NUSAS retained fairly close ties with the NCFS and through annual congresses held simultaneously at the same venues, was able to meet students from the ethnic colleges. Fort Hare's religious societies had extensive ties with Fedsem which provided them 'with a forum to assert themselves politically' and whose staff, like, for example, Desmond Tutu (later Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town) acted as their chaplains.²⁴² The multi-racial and free Fedsem, much like the old Fort Hare before its takeover, was to become a refuge for Fort Hare students, many of them fleeing there during confrontations with the police in 1973.²⁴³

²³⁴ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1963, na., 'Fort Hare Report', 14.11.1963.

²³⁵ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1964, p. 20; M1, Peter Mansfield, 'Fort Hare', March 1965; O1.1, Jonty Driver to Michael Bands, 6.3.1964.

²³⁶ BC 586 A2.2, 'Pete' to Maeder Osler, 8.3.1965; 'V-P' to 'Sam', 14.5.1965; B1 Assembly Minutes 1965, p. 57; E. Webster, 'Rhodes University: Chairman's Report to Congress, July 1965', p. 67; O1.1, 'Minutes of SRC meeting, Rhodes University, 5th of May 1965', p. 5.

²³⁷ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1966, pp. 52, 70.

²³⁸ BC 586 B1, C. Moeletsi, 'Report to the 42nd Student Assembly of N.U.S.A.S. Fort Hare', 1966.

²³⁹ *ibid.*; BC 586 B1, C. Moeletsi, 'Report to the 42nd Student Assembly of N.U.S.A.S. Fort Hare', 1966.

²⁴⁰ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

²⁴¹ *Nux* no. 10, 17.9.1964, A. Egan, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

²⁴² D. Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

²⁴³ R. Cameron, 'Some political, ecumenical and theological aspects of the history of the Federal Theological Seminary: 1963-1975', MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1984, pp. 77-79.

Fedsem would also become the home of radical theology and once its avowedly non-racial staff and student body had overcome its objections to and confusion regarding it, Black Theology too.²⁴⁴ Radical theology and Black Theology, imported from South America and the USA respectively, would play a formative role in the thinking of both the UCM and the Black Consciousness movement. Black Theology 'condemns in the name of Christ, those who oppress' the black majority struggling for liberation. 'This was an attack at a very vulnerable point' against a government which claimed to be Christian.²⁴⁵ Thus the threat posed to the state by Black Theology's confrontation with apartheid, coupled to the belief that Fedsem was a subversive political influence in that it harboured NUSAS and instigated and fanned student resistance at Fort Hare (often allegedly NUSAS-induced), led to the expropriation of the seminary by the state in 1974.²⁴⁶

The University College of Durban-Westville (Salisbury Island)

Like Fedsem, UNNE was not a government-controlled institution and thus provided an avenue through which NUSAS could establish contact with the new Indian university in Durban. The enrolment at UNNE of many of those expelled from Fort Hare after 1959 improved NUSAS's prospects for securing the re-affiliation of black Natal students to NUSAS. The Medical School had long been sympathetic towards re-affiliation. (Because of their heavy workload, medical students were regarded as being less politically active than their Sastri counterparts²⁴⁷ and probably less radical too). NUSAS thus assiduously courted medical students either directly or through the Wits and UCT Medical Students' Councils or the Association of Medical Students of South Africa, the latter of which the Natal Medical Students Council was a member. NUSAS considered securing the separate affiliation of the Medical School, particularly considering that the rest of the black section of Natal University would eventually disappear following the establishment of the ethnic universities, but realised that such a divisive action could create tension and stand in the way of full re-affiliation.²⁴⁸ When the Separate Universities Education Bill was before parliament in April 1957 and NUSAS had made clear its intention of adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a very real possibility existed that the whole of UNNE (led by SRC president M.J. Naidoo) might re-affiliate. However, NUSAS's Western Cold War alignment, in addition to a still powerful NEUM minority at UNNE, continued to be stumbling blocks.²⁴⁹ A student mass meeting voted to collaborate with NUSAS against university apartheid.

²⁴⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 76, 83-86.

²⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 81.

²⁴⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 68, 70-71, 73-74, 80-82, 122-123, 129-130, 135-137.

²⁴⁷ L. Kuper, *An African bourgeoisie: race, class and politics in South Africa*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1965, p. 162.

²⁴⁸ BC 586 B4.1, John Shingler to the Executive, 2.5.1960, p. 2.

²⁴⁹ BC 586 B4.1, 'Report on the Executive Visit paid by Mr Wentzel (President) and Mr Rubin (Vice-Pres. for International Relations) to Rhodes, Grahamstown Train. Coll., Fort Hare, Univ. of Natal (Durban European, Non-

Suspecting that a re-affiliation was in the offing – and such a tentative suggestion did emanate from the floor - Mac Maharaj and a large number of NEUM supporters, brought in especially for the occasion, attempted unsuccessfully to amend the motion by adding that UNNE would not return to NUSAS.²⁵⁰ Nonetheless, NUSAS believed that this was quite a significant achievement.

The announcement by the government in the latter half of 1960 of its intention of opening a new Indian university in Durban the following year, under its newly created Department of Indian Affairs, precipitated UNNE's re-affiliation to NUSAS in September 1960.²⁵¹ NUSAS hailed the return of UNNE as an 'auspicious and historic' event which would facilitate the creation of a student united front against apartheid.²⁵² Due to some constitutional wrangling by the NEUM and its sympathisers desperate to keep NUSAS off the campus, the notice to re-affiliate was withdrawn²⁵³ and only re-instated in February 1961.²⁵⁴ In spite of this hiccup, NUSAS believed that UNNE would shape and direct NUSAS policies 'in the very tricky years to come'²⁵⁵ and tasked its Local Committee with establishing contact with students at the new Indian ethnic college.²⁵⁶

The imminent establishment of the new university and the closing of UNNE to Indian students wishing to register for Arts, Commerce and Science degrees²⁵⁷ goaded the hitherto divided Indian community into action. A meeting (to which NUSAS was invited but was unable to attend)²⁵⁸ convened by the South African Indian Congress and the conservative South African Indian Organisation, voted not to co-operate with the government and to setup an alternative non-apartheid correspondence higher education institution through which students could follow degrees offered by the University of London.²⁵⁹ This threatened to duplicate the services of SACHED and, more seriously, the wide publicity given to the defiant Indian response jeopardised the very existence of such anti-apartheid correspondence initiatives like SACHED. NUSAS nevertheless welcomed the 'Indian alternative' because it effectively amounted to a boycott of the new tribal college and was interpreted as such by the Indian community.²⁶⁰ After a slow start²⁶¹

European, Pietermaritzburg and Medical School) and Natal Training College', 30.3.1957, p. 8; Trevor Coombe to the Executive, 1.8.1957, p. 2; M4.1, M.J. Naidoo to Ernie Wentzel, 18.4.1957; Trevor Coombe to M.J. Naidoo, 1.5.1957.

²⁵⁰ BC 586 B4.1, 'Report on the Executive Visit paid by Mr Wentzel (President) and Mr Rubin (Vice-Pres. for International Relations) to Rhodes, Grahamstown Train. Coll., Fort Hare, Univ. of Natal (Durban European, Non-European, Pietermaritzburg and Medical School) and Natal Training College', 30.3.1957, p. 10.

²⁵¹ BC 586 M4.1, Roger Maistry to 'The NUSAS President', 21.9.1960; *Dome*, October 1960.

²⁵² BC 586 M4.1, John Shingler, 'Message to UNNE upon their re-affiliation to NUSAS on 5th October, 1960'.

²⁵³ BC 586 M4.1, John Shingler to Thumba Pillay, 27.10.1960; John Shingler to D.S. Rajah, 27.10.1960; 'Minutes of the SRC meeting held in the SRC office, Marion Buildings on the 30th November 1960 at 4.30 pm', p. 3.

²⁵⁴ BC 586 M4.1, Thumba Pillay to Adrian Leftwich, 15.2.1961; 21.2.1961; Adrian Leftwich to Thumba Pillay, 18.2.1961, 23.2.1961; Adrian Leftwich to Laurie (Geffen) and Hugh (Lewin), 12.5.1961.

²⁵⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1961, p. 11.

²⁵⁶ BC 586 M4.1, Adrian Leftwich to Thumba Pillay, 16.3.1961.

²⁵⁷ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1960, p. 11.

²⁵⁸ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1961, p. 66.

²⁵⁹ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1961*, pp. 30, 259-260.

²⁶⁰ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Hugh (Lewin) and Laurie (Geffen), 10.1.1961.

²⁶¹ *ibid.*

(between one hundred and fifty and two hundred students applied unsuccessfully to enroll at UNNE),²⁶² and the collapse of the 'Indian alternative',²⁶³ approximately one hundred and twenty students registered at the new college. Most of these failed to meet the minimum academic admission requirements. Following the release of the matric supplementary exam results, eighty students were deregistered from their degree courses. Though initially having promised to do so, the university authorities refused to refund the registration fees of the affected students, forcibly persuading them to remain at the college to follow diploma courses. In this way, the authorities hoped to deceive the public into believing that the college was well patronised and accepted by the Indian community. UNNE planned to publicise the conflict while NUSAS intended to undertake action via its SRCs.²⁶⁴ There were subsequently 'rumblings' at the college,²⁶⁵ though these could also have been linked to the republican stay-at-home.

The new Indian University College, eventually named the University College of Durban Westville, was initially situated in a disused (discarded) naval barracks on Salisbury Island in Durban Bay,²⁶⁶ its siting a forcible reminder to students that they too were 'discarded'.²⁶⁷ This 'Alcatraz'²⁶⁸ as it became known, could be reached by ferry from Durban harbour (free to whites)²⁶⁹ or via a long desolate pedestrian causeway. In keeping with the provisions of the Extension of University Education Act, an Indian Advisory Council was established, which the Indian community announced it would boycott, and special courses in Tamil, Hindi, Gujarati and Sanskrit were on offer.²⁷⁰ The new rector was Professor S.P. Olivier from UCT and, like all the other ethnic college heads, a member of the *Broederbond*.²⁷¹ He was fanatically committed to overseeing the success of the new college and staged elaborate public relations exercises to create a positive image of the institution and attract more students to it. He and his Indian staff members toured Indian schools in Natal in order to persuade them to enroll at Salisbury Island. Shortly before 'parents' day', new furniture, curtains and a bus appeared on the campus, only to disappear again immediately after the event.²⁷² Though this was probably also a dishonest public relations exercise (Leftwich held Olivier to be a 'weak' and 'uncertain man'),²⁷³ Olivier stated that racially

²⁶² BC 586 M4.1, Thumba Pillay to Adrian Leftwich, 21.2.1961. Cutten records that university apartheid had already begun to take its toll in 1960, only six 'coloured' students being permitted to enroll at UNNE that year. M. Cutten, 'Natal University and the question of autonomy 1959-1962', BA (Honours) dissertation, University of Natal, Durban, 1987, p. 30.

²⁶³ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1961, p. 42.

²⁶⁴ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to Adrian Leftwich, 9.5.1961, p. 2; Adrian Leftwich to Hugh Lewin, 25.5.1961.

²⁶⁵ 'Grey Street Complex timeline 1800-1999', <http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/grey-street-complex-timeline-1800-1999>, accessed 12.11.2014.

²⁶⁶ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1961*, p. 259.

²⁶⁷ D. Govinden, 'Remembering Salisbury Island', 'Yesterday Today' vol. 6, Vanderbijlpark, January 2011, http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?pid=s223-038620110001=00009&script=sci_artext accessed 10.8.2015.

²⁶⁸ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Hugh Lewin, 25.5.1961.

²⁶⁹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 47.

²⁷⁰ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1961, p. 67.

²⁷¹ I. Wilkins and H. Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaners*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1980, pp. 263, A175, A184, A198.

²⁷² BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 8.11.1961, p. 10.

²⁷³ *ibid.*, 11.5.1962, p. 9.

separate universities had nothing to do with apartheid but were simply a method of extending education.²⁷⁴

Leftwich wrote to Olivier requesting permission to investigate the affiliation of the Indian College students to NUSAS, but without success. A number of Salisbury Island students attended the 1961 NUSAS congress held conveniently in Durban. Evidently inspired by the event's proceedings, some of these observers volunteered to undertake NUSAS activities at Salisbury Island and establish a NUSAS branch there. Though the UNNE SRC president had called for a boycott of the new college,²⁷⁵ and UNNE students generally tended to be rather 'stand offish' towards their tribal college compatriots, viewing them to some extent as sellouts to apartheid,²⁷⁶ Mhlambiso and members of the UNNE Local Committee agreed to further the cause of NUSAS activities on Salisbury Island. To do so they sought the help of the Natal Indian Youth Congress which had contacts there. Leftwich felt that the establishment of a Salisbury Island NUSAS branch and then the branch's request to the college authorities for official recognition would be a more effective tactic than an approach by NUSAS. The authorities would refuse the students' request, Leftwich surmised, opening the way for NUSAS to blow the issue sky high and again prove how far the ethnic colleges deviated from the nature of 'true' universities.²⁷⁷ By the end of 1961, nothing concrete had materialised. A group of Island students who Leftwich met in Durban were wary of NUSAS, fearful of committing themselves, and very afraid of informers definitely present in their student body.²⁷⁸

The 1962 academic year opened with a call by an 'Action Committee' (an organisation unknown to Mhlambiso but linked to a newspaper, the *Indian Graphic* which had openly called for a boycott of the college in 1961)²⁷⁹ for the boycott of classes in protest against conditions at the college. This measure was wholeheartedly endorsed by the NIYC. The rector got wind of this and issued a threatening warning to students not to stay away, with the result that the boycott was called off.²⁸⁰ Leftwich's earlier expressed fear was realised: namely, that the politically and tactically unconscious student body (the first years were particularly jittery)²⁸¹ would be cowed and outmanoeuvred by Olivier.²⁸²

In the meantime, plans were laid for the establishment of a NUSAS branch. A former UNNE student and NUSAS Local Committee member, Durag Behari, who planned to enroll at Salisbury

²⁷⁴ *ibid.*

²⁷⁵ M. Cutten, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

²⁷⁶ Jonty Driver via email, 2.12.2014.

²⁷⁷ BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 9.8.1961.

²⁷⁸ B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 8.11.1961, p. 11.

²⁷⁹ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Hugh (Lewin) and Laurie (Geffen), 10.1.1961.

²⁸⁰ BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 12.3.1962; 17.3.1962.

²⁸¹ BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 17.3.1962.

²⁸² BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 9.8.1961.

Island, was to work from the inside.²⁸³ While members of the Natal NUSAS executive and UNNE Local Committee were distributing flyers advertising a proposed NUSAS meeting to students disembarking from the ferry, an altercation with an angry Olivier occurred regarding the flyers and 'his children's' affiliation to NUSAS.²⁸⁴ It was believed that the paternalistic rector favoured an association with the ASB.²⁸⁵ Nonetheless, shortly after this, an underground NUSAS branch, the 'Island Students' Association' came into existence, similar in structure to the underground 'Imps Society' at Durban Training College, a strongly NP and ASB-inclined institution where NUSAS was also banned from operating.²⁸⁶ Contact with the Indian College students increased significantly, meetings taking place off-campus and often on the beach.²⁸⁷ The Island Students' Association ran the gauntlet of hostility not only from the college authorities but also from the NEUM-aligned Durban Students' Union (DSU). In an effort to extend the activities of the newly formed PSNO in Natal, the DSU actively and persistently worked towards destroying NUSAS's presence at both Salisbury Island and UNNE,²⁸⁸ almost effecting the disaffiliation of the latter in August 1962.²⁸⁹

In addition to keeping NUSAS off the campus, the Salisbury Island authorities attempted to ensure the isolation of the student body. Some observers suspected that one of the reasons prompting the sudden and hasty establishment of a separate Indian university was the increasing contact between students at Durban and UNNE. Maeder Osler, president of the Pietermaritzburg SRC in 1962-3, recalled that there was much contact and socialising between Pietermaritzburg NUSAS members and their counterparts at UNNE. Black and white working together was not an unusual phenomenon and at some levels social mixing occurred too.²⁹⁰ These were evidently phenomena that the Salisbury Island authorities had no wish to replicate, as demonstrated by a number of incidents. When white Durban students arrived at the college 'open day', they were warned that they were being monitored while they visited students in their rooms.²⁹¹ Of equal concern to Olivier was the presence of Dutch sailors at a college dance and soccer match. Henceforward, visitors were barred from the campus.²⁹² To the fury of Olivier, a photograph of a 'private property' 'no entry' signpost erected at the college was published in *Wits Student* with the caption 'a university?'. NUSAS ensured the distribution of this photograph to other student newspapers.²⁹³ In September 1962, Leftwich visited Salisbury Island but was informed that no

²⁸³ BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 17.3.1962.

²⁸⁴ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 11.5.1962, p. 9; *Witwatersrand Student*, 27.4.1962; *Varsity* vol. 21 no. 4, 2.5.1962.

²⁸⁵ *Dome*, October 1962.

²⁸⁶ BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 9.11.1961.

²⁸⁷ Maeder Osler, telephonically, 8.12.2014.

²⁸⁸ *Nux* no. 6, 21.6.1962; no. 10, 20.9.1962; *Dome*, October 1962.

²⁸⁹ *Nux* no. 14, 20.9.1962.

²⁹⁰ Maeder Osler, telephonically, 8.12.2014.

²⁹¹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, p. 53.

²⁹² BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 47.

²⁹³ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, p. 54.

NUSAS representative would be permitted to meet the student body until such time as the national union recanted its opposition to university apartheid.²⁹⁴ In a strongly worded and defiant press release publicising this incident, NUSAS stated that it would never relinquish its principles. In addition, it asserted that it was forced to operate underground at the college and would continue to do so 'as part of [its] struggle for full university freedom in South Africa'. Moreover, Olivier was challenged to hold a referendum to determine whether or not Salisbury Island students voluntarily attended the apartheid college.²⁹⁵

In 1962, an SRC came into existence. However, like the post-university apartheid Fort Hare SRC, it was a short-lived 'rector's representative council'. Olivier assumed the right to veto all SRC decisions and insisted that a member of staff sit in on all meetings and all minutes were sent to the rectorate. Worse was expected of the residence house committee members, who resigned after refusing to 'ferret' out information about the activities of their fellow students and report on these to the authorities.²⁹⁶ Subsequently, the student body drew up a new SRC constitution conferring on student government the same freedoms enjoyed by those at other NUSAS-affiliated universities.²⁹⁷ NUSAS committed itself to fight for the rights of students at Salisbury Island,²⁹⁸ probably in line with its Fort Hare policy of forcing a student rights issue and provoking a confrontation. Whether this materialised or not, hostility towards NUSAS and the Island Students' Association intensified, the rector threatening to take action against any student associated with the national union.²⁹⁹ A student was forbidden to observe the 1962 NUSAS executive meeting though this measure was also motivated by the fear that he planned to attend the preparatory meeting of the new non-racial sports body³⁰⁰ (the South African Non-racial Olympic Committee - SANROC) aimed at isolating South African sport internationally. Salisbury Island was absent from the 1963 NUSAS congress too³⁰¹ and by the end of that year, the Island Students' Association was dormant.³⁰²

Indian College students were probably not spared the consequences of the massive security clampdown of 1963-4, which engulfed Fort Hare and to a lesser extent, UNNE. At the latter, leading members of the NIYC, ANC and NEUM were detained without trial and/or slapped with banning orders.³⁰³ The security police raided the Salisbury Island student residences in 1963.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁴ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1962*, p. 200.

²⁹⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, p. 53.

²⁹⁶ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 47.

²⁹⁷ *Dome*, October 1962.

²⁹⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹⁹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, p. 53.

³⁰⁰ *ibid.*

³⁰¹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 47.

³⁰² BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1963, p. 16.

³⁰³ These included Ernest Galo, an ANC activist and past vice-president of the UNNE SRC and president of the African Student Association who was detained in 1963. Thami Mhlambiso, former vice-president of NUSAS and president of the UNNE SRC in 1963 was banned in 1964 and imprisoned in 1965. Thumba Pillay, UNNE SRC president in 1961,

Demonstrating the authoritarian climate of the times, Ashwin Shah and three other students were detained under the General Law Amendment Act in 1964 merely for advertising the decision of the 'Student Organisation'³⁰⁵ to boycott the 'tribal college' graduation. The NIYC was fully supportive of this action and NIYC students at Springfield Teacher Training College (which NUSAS had long attempted to affiliate without success³⁰⁶) designed and printed the leaflets and posters for this.³⁰⁷

The University College of Zululand (Ngoye)

Salisbury Island was not the only new ethnic college in Natal. The new government college for Zulu and Swazi speakers³⁰⁸ was situated approximately one hundred miles from Durban at Ngoye, an African reserve, near Mtzumzini in Northern Natal. Of the forty one students who enrolled in 1960 for courses in the Arts, Social Sciences, Commerce and Education, only seven were registered for degrees. Tuition and accommodation fees were substantially lower than those at the predominantly white universities and state loans, coupled to employment by the Departments of Bantu Education and Administration and Development or the Bantu Authorities,

NIC and later UDF activist and judge, believed his banning was due to his opposition to separate universities and the General Law Amendment Act rather than his NIC activities. 'University of Durban-Westville Documentation Centre Oral History Project "Voices of Resistance". Interviewee: Justice Thumba Pillay. Interviewer: Musa Ntsodi. Date: 31 July 2002. Place: Greenwood Park, Dbn', scnc.ukzn.ac.za/.../Pillay,Thumba.DOC.Doc file. Web view accessed 1.11.2014. George Mbele, a leading member of the ANC, was detained in mid-1963. *Nux* no. 7, June, 1963. Jivan Desai, a law student, a past president of the Durban Students' Union and a member of APDUSA was banned in 1964. The 1964/5 SRC president, Mewa Ramgobin, a leading NIC and later UDF activist received a warning from the Minister of Justice and was subsequently banned in 1965. Karrim Essack, a NEUM and APDUSA activist was banned in 1963 and detained in 1964. Although Essack was perhaps not a student at UNNE at the time, he, along with Mac Maharaj had been at the forefront of ensuring that UNNE would not re-affiliate to NUSAS in 1957. Mac Maharaj was arrested in June 1964 and found guilty in the 'Little Rivonia' trial. Rogers Ragaven, chairperson of the NUSAS Local Committee in the early 1960s and NUSAS deputy vice-president in 1968 was banned in 1968. BC 586 B1, Mewa Ramgobin, 'Report of the UNNE SRC to the NUSAS Congress 1965', p. 6; E.S. Reddy, 'Whose [sic] who ca 1940-1980: biographical notes on Indians in South Africa', p. 11, http://scnc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/B/Ms/Miscellaneous/Biographical_Notes_On_Indian_In_South_Africa_By_E_S_reddy.pdf accessed 17.11.2014.

³⁰⁴ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 47.

³⁰⁵ It is not clear what this 'Student Organisation' was.

³⁰⁶ BC 586 B4.1, John Shingler to the Executive, 2.5.1960, p. 2; A2.2, Maeder Osler, 'Memo to Jonty on V.P.'s visit', March 1964, p. 14.

³⁰⁷ 'Biographical notes on Indians in South Africa', August 1996,

<http://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/Biographies-%20Indians.pdf> accessed 29.10.2014; 'University of Durban-Westville Documentation Centre Oral History Project "Voices of Resistance". Interviewee: Subbiah Moodley. Interviewer: Vino Redd. Date: Wednesday 3 July 2002. Place: Shannon Drive Reservoir Hills Durban, scnc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/Audio/TranscriptsORIGINALFULL/...DOCfile accessed 1.11.2014; BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 19. Subbiah Moodley at Springfield College was also detained and subsequently brought to trial for his role in printing the posters. Probably unknown to students and the police at the time, he was also an *Umkonto we Sizwe* operative under Ronnie Kasrils. 'University of Durban-Westville Documentation Centre Oral History Project "Voices of Resistance". Interviewee: Subbiah Moodley. Interviewer: Vino Redd. Date: Wednesday 3 July 2002. Place: Shannon Drive reservoir Hills Durban', scnc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/Audio/TranscriptsORIGINALFULL/...DOCfile accessed 1.11.2014.

³⁰⁸ There was at least one Xhosa-speaking student at the college in the early 1960s. Driver recalls that during a visit that he, Leftwich and Mhlambiso paid to Ngoye in about 1962, Mhlambiso met to his amazement a Xhosa-speaking friend, who, like him, had also been expelled from Fort Hare for political activity. In explaining how he had successfully gained admission to the college by claiming to be Zulu-speaking he exclaimed, 'Ag man, these Boers are so ignorant they will believe anything...'. Jonty Driver via email, 2.12.2014; C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', Unpublished memoir, p. 13.

were available for a large proportion of the amount.³⁰⁹ As at all the ethnic colleges, staff salary scales and benefits were racially differentiated and social segregation strictly enforced. Black and white employees were housed separately and toilets and even cooking utensils were racially segregated.³¹⁰ White staff members received a twelve shilling mosquito allowance whereas their black colleagues were entitled to a mere four pence.³¹¹ The rector of Ngoye was Dr P.A.W. Cook, a senior employee in the old Native Affairs Department, who had supplied a substantial amount of evidence to the 1958 Commission of Inquiry into the Separate Universities.

At the beginning of the 1960 academic year, the NUSAS executive laid plans for visiting the new ethnic college. It was agreed that permission would be sought to visit the rector at the campus and if this materialised, request his permission to address the student body regarding its affiliation to the national union. Were the visit refused, NUSAS would still proceed to the college provided that it had secured the necessary permit from the Bantu Authorities to enter a tribal area.³¹² If this too was unsuccessful, NUSAS would not defy the law – it had no mandate from the student assembly to do so – but would release to the press all the correspondence regarding the visit so as to highlight the reality of university apartheid.³¹³ Ultimately, the events of Sharpeville overtook the Ngoye arrangements.

The 1960 NUSAS congress undertook to break the isolation of the ethnic college students by encouraging all affiliates to make contact with them. Putting this resolution into effect did not seem promising. At the 'Natal education conference' in Durban, Cook accused NUSAS of 'irresponsible incitement and agitation'.³¹⁴ He did however allow members of the Durban SRC, including David Gordon, then the chairperson of the Durban Local NUSAS Committee, to visit the college and even meet, in his presence, a selected group of Ngoye students. Cook would not countenance any further inter-university contact though. Debates with the Durban and Pietermaritzburg debating unions were ruled out because, Cook explained, the Ngoye students were too inexperienced. The real reason for this however was probably Cook's fear of a politicised student body. To avoid this, all topics for discussion by the college debating society were decided by the authorities and political discussion in general was banned on the campus.³¹⁵ No students were permitted to attend the 1961 NUSAS congress³¹⁶ though some expressed a desire to do so.³¹⁷

³⁰⁹ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1958-9*, p. 278; *A Survey of Race Relations 1959-60*, pp. 228-229, 234, 237.

³¹⁰ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, p. 52.

³¹¹ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 8.11.1961, pp. 9-10.

³¹² BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 7.3.1960.

³¹³ *ibid.*, 15.3.1960.

³¹⁴ BC 586 B4.1, John Shingler to the Executive, 29.9.1960, p. 4.

³¹⁵ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1960, pp. 10-11.

³¹⁶ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1961*, p. 254.

³¹⁷ BC 586 A2.1, Hugh Lewin to Adrian Leftwich, 9.5.1961.

In October/November 1961, Leftwich and Mhlambiso were permitted to meet the Ngoye student body off-campus. Meetings in the future would always take place thus, not because of 'any cloak and dagger stuff' but because the students were uncomfortable with the presence of NUSAS officials within the college precincts.³¹⁸ The NUSAS visitors of 1961 believed Cook to be a clever and astute rector. Through his careful handling of the student body he ensured that it had no grounds for complaint and dissatisfaction.³¹⁹ As noted earlier, at black educational institutions, subsistence and discipline issues could escalate into explosive, overtly political protests, having become infused with more general and explicit political discontent. The newly appointed SRC, which superseded a partially appointed 'student council'³²⁰ asserted that it enjoyed 'full powers' even being able to invite whosoever it pleased to address the student body. Moreover students felt that facilities at Ngoye were good and much better than those at Natal where, because of segregation, students were offered a limited academic education and little or no access to social and sporting facilities.

Students believed that Cook was a 'reasonable man'.³²¹ His successful management of the student body could quite probably be attributed to a full phalanx of informers he had at his disposal. The visit of NUSAS as well as those of invited outside lecturers were probably approved because they would be fully monitored by Cook's eyes and ears. Shortly after the NUSAS visit, a member of the Ngoye SRC, who seemed to have the confidence of the rector, indicated his intention of attending the 1961 NUSAS executive meeting in Cape Town. He made it clear though that this information should be kept absolutely secret, particularly from other members of his SRC who he suggested were informers. This posed a dilemma for the NUSAS leadership because while desperately keen to include Ngoye, they were afraid that this particular student was in fact an informer sent by the rector to spy on the national union. It was decided that he would be told not to come³²² and he evidently did not, his name being absent from the meeting's minutes.

For NUSAS it became apparent that students at Ngoye were the 'most conservative' and 'confused' of all those enrolled at the ethnic colleges.³²³ In 1962 it was discovered that some even supported the PP.³²⁴ Through lack of exposure, Ngoye students were ignorant of what traditionally constituted a university and thus also of concepts like academic freedom and student rights.³²⁵ They were however opposed to the principle of racially separate universities. Because students were generally satisfied with the college and thus prepared to defend it, they were not

³¹⁸ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

³¹⁹ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 8.11.1961, pp. 9-10.

³²⁰ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1959-60*, p. 238.

³²¹ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 8.11.1961, pp. 9-10.

³²² BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 23.11.1961; Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 25.11.1961.

³²³ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 8.11.1961, pp. 9-10.

³²⁴ *ibid.*, 11.5.1962.

³²⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1961, p. 62.

willing to initiate protest over a loss of student rights.³²⁶ Presumably then too, they would also not be amenable to provoking a crisis like that of the ‘tea-party’ at Fort Hare in September 1960 and making the university ungovernable. Nonetheless, Leftwich concluded that the student body at Ngoye was very important to NUSAS as it was composed of the ‘sort of men we need in this country’.³²⁷ These ‘men’ included Sibusiso Bengu (a one time member of the *Inkatha* Freedom Party and later Minister of Education in the Mandela government),³²⁸ and Sam Mhlongo (a supporter of the PAC from Soweto,³²⁹ who would later serve as a medical specialist on Thabo Mbeki’s HIV/AIDS panel).³³⁰ Somewhat patronisingly then, Leftwich contended that Ngoye ‘men’ needed to ‘become more aware and take up some courage’. This could be achieved, he reasoned, through lots of contact and discussion.³³¹

Maintaining contact and facilitating discussion with Ngoye during 1962 and 63 was undertaken by the NUSAS-affiliated student bodies in Natal and the NUSAS executive,³³² particularly in the latter, Mhlambiso. Evidently the restrictions on the Ngoye debating society were lifted as its members were hosted by their Pietermaritzburg counterparts in 1962.³³³ UNNE sports teams travelled to Ngoye but these occasions were marred by some unpleasant incidents (not spelt out)³³⁴ presumably relating to segregation and Cook’s stipulation that the visiting teams should be composed only of Zulu-speaking Africans. Ngoye students, including Mhlongo, attended both the 1962 NUSAS congress and executive meeting as observers.³³⁵ NUSAS placed a premium on ethnic college participation in its forums and to this end had procured financial assistance from the United States NSA.³³⁶

Concerted efforts were made to establish a NUSAS branch at Ngoye and by late 1963/early 1964, unconfirmed reports seemed to suggest that one had indeed come into existence.³³⁷ This was probably true as Osler recalls that there were small NUSAS branches at all the Natal ethnic colleges at this time.³³⁸ Though it was most unlikely that the Ngoye branch would ever enjoy official campus recognition, Cook astutely indicated that the question of affiliation to NUSAS

³²⁶ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 8.11.1961, pp. 9-10.

³²⁷ BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 2.11.1961.

³²⁸ ‘Sibusiso Bengu’, ‘who’swho southernfrica’ [sic], <http://whoswho.co.za/sibusiso-bengu-2249> accessed 15.8.2015.

³²⁹ BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 9.11.1961.

³³⁰ ‘Key South African HIV/AIDS critic Sam Mhlongo dies’, <http://forums.questioningaids.com/showthread.php?light-and-spirit-Prof-Sam-Mhlongo-RIP-Came-g3125> accessed 15.8.2015.

³³¹ BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 2.11.1961.

³³² BC 586 B4.1, Jonty Driver to the Executive, ‘Confidential memorandum events: March, April, May 1963’, 4.6.1963; Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

³³³ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 11.5.1962, p. 8.

³³⁴ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1964, p. 10.

³³⁵ BC 586 B3 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 46; B1 Presidential Report 1963, p. 51.

³³⁶ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Derek Bostock, 16.11.1962; 22.11.1962.

³³⁷ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 18; Jonty Driver to Martin (Legassick) and James (White), 17.4.1964, p. 5.

³³⁸ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

would be held over for his successor, Professor J.A. Maree of the University of Pretoria, to decide.³³⁹

Even before the arrival of the new rector in 1964, the era of Cook's carefully cultivated politically docile student body was coming to an end. Mhlongo, NUSAS's most important contact and, despite his PAC preferences, NUSAS's strongest promoter, believed that the student body would react to 'an incident'.³⁴⁰ Twenty Ngoye students (others were too afraid to add their names) sent an open letter to NUSAS complaining about the poor conditions pertaining at the college. These included the assault by a Commerce lecturer of a student unable to answer a question during a class, the encouragement of students to study in Afrikaans because of the poor English language skills of the staff, the censorship of the student newsletter, the quality of the food and the rigid social segregation enforced on the campus. NUSAS was instrumental in having this open letter published in the press.³⁴¹ Mhlongo was refused readmission to Ngoye in 1963,³⁴² presumably because he was held to be one of the protest's ringleaders. NUSAS arranged a medical scholarship for him at the University of Dublin, from where he was able to represent NUSAS at overseas student gatherings.³⁴³ Mhlongo's effective expulsion presaged the national security clampdown of 1963-4.

The assumption of Maree to the rectorship in 1964 inaugurated a period of increasing authoritarianism at Ngoye. A student was expelled for arguing with a member of staff, but the evidently cowed SRC was too afraid to take up the matter, to the ire of the disgruntled student body.³⁴⁴ This SRC was overtly Africanist. During a NUSAS visit to the college in 1964, it rudely refused to contemplate an association with the national union and accused Mhlambiso and UNNE SRC member, Darkie Sepobedi of being 'stooges'. Henceforward, NUSAS resolved to work with more sympathetic students opposed to the SRC's stance.³⁴⁵

The University College of the North (Turfloop)

Establishing contact with students at the newly established University College of the North (UCON) in order to secure affiliation proved very difficult for NUSAS. Although Bantu Normal College had been affiliated to NUSAS before its closure and incorporation into the UCON, none of its students transferred to the new institution. Thus NUSAS, somewhat opportunistically given its attitude towards the radical left, relied on Wits COD members, like Saul Bastomsky to headhunt Turfloop students. Shingler believed that the white left was viewed with somewhat less suspicion

³³⁹ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1963, p. 16.

³⁴⁰ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 11.5.1962.

³⁴¹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, p. 52.

³⁴² BC 586 B4.1, Jonty Driver to the Executive, 26.2.1963, p. 3.

³⁴³ *ibid.*, 9.10.1963, p. 4.

³⁴⁴ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1964, p. 10.

³⁴⁵ BC 586 Maeder Osler to Jonty Driver, 13.3.1964; 'Memo to Jonty on vice-president's visit in March 1964', p. 13.

by the black community than were white liberals³⁴⁶ and, moreover, had far greater involvement with the black community than NUSAS ever had. Later on SACHED would provide the avenue of communication between NUSAS and the UCON.³⁴⁷

As with Ngoye, contact with the new Transvaal university college was made more difficult because of the sheer isolation and remoteness of the campus. It was situated thirty kilometres from Pietersburg in an African reserve entirely devoid of human habitation³⁴⁸ to which moreover, like at Ngoye, a permit was required to enter.³⁴⁹ Four hundred thousand pounds (a fraction of that required for the new University of Ghana) were expended on constructing a fairly impressive residential university which, with its Arts, Science and Education faculties, as well as courses in Native Administration and trading³⁵⁰ aimed to churn out the personnel required to manage the hazily envisaged Bantustans of the future. In conformity with the government's policy of ethnicisation, the architecture incorporated ethnic patterns and designs purportedly those of the Sepedi, Xitsonga and Setswana language groups for which the university catered.³⁵¹ Outdoor and indoor *lapas* or *lekgotlas* with kraal manure floors, which were never used,³⁵² replaced the more usual common rooms in the student residences.

Professor E.F. Potgieter, the first rector of Turfloop, was conversant in the local vernacular and importantly, like one of the architects of Bantu Education, Eiselen, was an anthropologist from the University of Pretoria. Twenty eight years after the establishment of the ethnic college, Potgieter claimed that he had aimed at the gradual creation of 'First World individuals'³⁵³ 'freed from traditional emotionalism', in contradistinction to Verwoerd whom he claimed envisaged 'guiding' Africans to the 'Third World'.³⁵⁴ In 1960 he stated vaguely that the task of the university was 'to build a tradition of our own and function as one organism'.³⁵⁵ The University Staff Association was particularly concerned at moulding an apartheid-orientated 'Bantu' from its 'intellectually different' student body through a synthesis of the 'best' of black and Western culture. Thus particular attention was paid to fostering African culture on the campus in the form of art, pottery and dance and presumably to counter the influence of American jazz with which the Staff Association (disapprovingly?) believed Africans had a rhythmic affinity, the development of African music

³⁴⁶ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 19.2.1960.

³⁴⁷ BC 586 M2, Abel Zwane to Adrian Leftwich, 5.12.1961; Ben S. Makua to Adrian Leftwich, 13.12.1961.

³⁴⁸ BC 586 M2, Clive Rosendorf, 'Turfloop Report', 2.6.1961, p. 2.

³⁴⁹ BC 586 A2.1, John Shingler to Laurie Geffen, 15.3.1960.

³⁵⁰ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1959-1960*, pp. 229, 237.

³⁵¹ BC 586 M2, Clive Rosendorf, 'Turfloop Report', 2.6.1961, p. 2; D. Hunt, 'A few notes on two visits to Turfloop', nd., p. 10.

³⁵² BC 586 M2, M. Horrell SAIRR, 'Report by Research Officer on a visit to the University College of the North, 4.4.1960', p. 2; D. Hunt, 'A few notes on two visits to Turfloop', nd., pp. 2, 10; C.W. White, *From despair to hope: the Turfloop experience*, UNIN Press, Sovenga, 1997, p. 86.

³⁵³ C.W. White, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

³⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 86.

³⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 85.

through the use of simple traditional orchestral instruments.³⁵⁶ By 1962, a pottery and art studio was in existence on the campus.³⁵⁷

In conformity with Bantu Education, it was officially stated that the media of instruction would be both official languages³⁵⁸ even though some within the NP, like members of the Potchefstroom SRC who visited the campus in 1961, believed that instruction would eventually be in the vernacular.³⁵⁹ In practice, however, most lectures were delivered in Afrikaans,³⁶⁰ a language that many students did not follow. Turfloop students believed this was a sinister plot to promote Afrikaans and sideline English,³⁶¹ rather than perhaps merely a lack of English proficiency amongst the staff. Perhaps reinforcing the suspicion of Turfloop students, in 1963 a Nationalist academic stated that both the growth and power of Afrikaans depended on the African majority speaking the language.

The new rector, Potgieter, like his other ethnic college counterparts, was fanatically committed to see the new apartheid university succeed.³⁶² Like the Eastern Cape, Sekhukhuneland was a hotbed of resistance to Bantu Authorities, Betterment and Bantu Education³⁶³ and in 1958 the ANC was banned in Sekhukhuneland and parts of the Soutpansberg.³⁶⁴ Just thirty kilometres to the west of the campus, the GaMatlala community, with some input from the ANC, continued their decade-long struggle against rural restructuring³⁶⁵ while thirty kilometres to the university's east, opposition by the Wolkberg community to their forced removal had been violently countered by the state.³⁶⁶ Thus it can be presumed that Potgieter had to ensure that the UCON did not become like Fort Hare, a site of struggle against government policies. Thus, like at Fort Hare, freedom of movement was seriously restricted as was freedom of thought and association, while fear and intimidation became a means of control over the student population.

The small student body (eighty eight in 1960³⁶⁷ and nearly one hundred and thirty in 1961³⁶⁸) could be divided along political and geographical lines. Those from the Witwatersrand were politicised, radical and keenly aware of their lack of student rights, whereas those from the Northern Transvaal and the rural areas were ignorant of the nature of other universities, wanted to

³⁵⁶ BC 586 M2, 'A few notes on the role which a University College of the North Staff Association should be able to fill', na., nd., c.1960 allegedly authored by the head of the History department.

³⁵⁷ BC 586 M2, D. Hunt, 'A few notes on two visits to Turfloop', nd., p. 1.

³⁵⁸ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1959-1960*, p. 237.

³⁵⁹ *Die Wapad*, 23.6.1961.

³⁶⁰ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1960, p. 9.

³⁶¹ BC 586 M2, B. Marengwa and J. Molepo, 'Report on the activities at Turfloop', nd., c.1961, pp. 9-10.

³⁶² BC 586 B1, Wits SRC, 'Report to NUSAS Assembly, July 1961', p. 5; M2, Clive Rosendorf, 'Turfloop Report', p. 4, 2.6.1961.

³⁶³ T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1985, p. 268.

³⁶⁴ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1957-1958*, pp. 14-15.

³⁶⁵ S. Zondi, 'Peasant struggles of the 1950s: gaMatlala and Zeerust', South African Democracy and Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 1, 1960-1970, op. cit.*, pp. 147-175.

³⁶⁶ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1958-1959*, pp. 127-128.

³⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 237.

³⁶⁸ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1961*, p. 258.

make the university work and were prepared to accept the rector's diktats.³⁶⁹ Despite the presence of the former group, the events at Sharpeville in March-April 1960 provoked no student reaction at the newly opened college.³⁷⁰

Students were not entirely docile during 1960-1 despite the severe restrictions imposed on them. They refused to build the playing fields,³⁷¹ embarked on a three day boycott of the dining hall because of their dislike of a warden,³⁷² would not elect *secundi*, junior to the paid *primarii* who were the eyes and ears of the rector,³⁷³ and declined to be interviewed for an SABC documentary, forcing the staff to dress up as students.³⁷⁴ Resistance to both lectures and inaugural lectures being delivered in Afrikaans, as well as segregated seating at university functions, occurred on a continuous basis.³⁷⁵ On the occasion of a student boycott of an inaugural lecture, the police were summoned to the campus to aid the black staff in guarding the hall where the function was taking place.³⁷⁶

At the beginning of 1961, two students, Bennet Marengwa and Job Molepo, were refused readmission to the college without any reasons being proffered.³⁷⁷ Neither student was particularly visible either as an activist or leader, though both had participated in the dining room boycott³⁷⁸ and Molepo moreover, was accused by the college authorities of slandering the institution to a British visitor.³⁷⁹ In addition, Molepo's father, a former president of the Transvaal Teachers' Association, had successfully sued a Bantu Education inspector, Aggenbag, leading to what many believed was Aggenbag's premature death.³⁸⁰ The college authorities knew this.³⁸¹ The Turfloop student body, as well as the Wits SRC, which complained to the Department of Bantu Education, regarded these expulsions as pure intimidation, the authorities making an example of Marengwa and Molepo to demonstrate what happened to those who did not support

³⁶⁹ BC 586 M2, Clive Rosendorf, 'Turfloop Report', 2.6.1961, p. 3. The whole issue of geographical origin and political orientation is unclear. An unsigned and undated letter in the NUSAS University of the North file from a Turfloop student states that 'Southerners' wished to please the rector. BC 586 M2, 'Copy', na., nd., c.1961.

³⁷⁰ BC 586 M2, M. Horrell, SAIRR, 'Report by Research Officer on a visit to the University College of the North, 4.4.1960'.

³⁷¹ BC 586 M2, B. Marengwa and J. Molepo, 'Report on the activities at Turfloop', nd., p. 6.

³⁷² *ibid.*; BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1960, p. 9.

³⁷³ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1960, p. 9.

³⁷⁴ *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 25, 8.9.1960.

³⁷⁵ *ibid.*; BC 586 M2, B. Marengwa and J. Molepo, 'Report on activities at Turfloop,' nd., pp. 7-9; *New Age*, 28.9.1961; B3 Executive Minutes 1960, p. 9.

³⁷⁶ BC 586 M2, B. Marengwa and J. Molepo, 'Report on activities at Turfloop', nd., p. 8.

³⁷⁷ *New Age*, 2.3.1961.

³⁷⁸ BC 586 M2, 'Report of the Refusal of Re-admittance of Two Students to the University College of the North', nd.

³⁷⁹ *NUSAS Newsletter* no. 24, 27.3.1961, p. 8.

³⁸⁰ T. Karis and G. Carter, *From protest to challenge*, Microfilm Collection, Interview with Congress Mbata, Reel 12A: XM: 71, 94.

³⁸¹ BC 586 M2, 'Report of the Refusal of Re-admittance of Two Students to the University College of the North', nd.

apartheid *in toto* and stepped out of line.³⁸² This instilled tremendous fear in the student body leading to a state of its near paralysis.³⁸³

This affected the functioning of the newly formed SRC, elected early in 1961. The coming into being of this body had been long delayed.³⁸⁴ The reasons for this were that the student body feared that its members would be victimised and secondly, the rector delayed his approval of changes to the constitution, recommended by the Wits SRC, which included *inter alia* depriving seats to the *primarii* and *secundi*.³⁸⁵ Within a few months of the SRC's existence however, some students were arguing, like at Fort Hare, for its abandonment because the rector was exploiting in divide and rule fashion the ideological and tactical differences of its members and turning it into a powerless tribal college structure.³⁸⁶ By June 1961, a number of members of the SRC, including the president Ezekiel Makhene, had resigned due to being reprimanded by the rector for visiting Wits without his permission and speaking to the press after a negative expose of campus conditions had appeared in the *Sunday Times*.³⁸⁷ Both of these activities flowed from NUSAS which used inter-campus visits as a means of building up contact and winning support for affiliation and used press exposes to champion its opposition to university apartheid.³⁸⁸ In addition to these transgressions, the SRC was accused of working towards a 'crisis',³⁸⁹ presumably connected to the inauguration of the Republic. The ANC-aligned within the student body called for a three day stay-away from classes on 29-31 May 1961 in response to the call of the All-In Conference as well as the mysterious 'Lumumba' (again evidence of the importance of the Congolese independence struggle – newly independent Congo's prime minister, Patrice Lumumba had just been assassinated by Western government agents). However, 'timid Southerners' on the SRC vetoed this as they refused to be used as a 'political platform' in an action that would be deplored by the rector.³⁹⁰

It is not clear who 'Lumumba' was. He could have been Thami Mhlambiso, ANC and NUSAS activist expelled from Fort Hare in 1961. During March/April 1961, Mhlambiso had responded enthusiastically to the suggestion by the NUSAS executive that he visit Turfloop 'sub rosa' (as he would later at Fort Hare) and 'inject some sort of fire' there.³⁹¹ Whether Mhlambiso was 'Lumumba' and/or did visit Turfloop and play a hand in the proposed anti-Republic boycott, his

³⁸² BC 586 B1, Wits SRC, 'Report to NUSAS Assembly, July 1961', p. 5; M2, M. Bobrow to the Minister of Bantu Education, 25.4.1961.

³⁸³ BC 586 M2, Clive Rosendorf, 'Turfloop Report', 2.6.1961; J. Molepo and B. Marengwa, 'Report on activities at Turfloop', nd.

³⁸⁴ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 13 no. 2, 10.3.1961.

³⁸⁵ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1960, p. 9.

³⁸⁶ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 27.4.1961; M2, 'Copy', letter, na., nd., c. 1961.

³⁸⁷ BC 586 B1, Wits SRC, 'Report to NUSAS Assembly, July 1961', pp. 5-6; M2, 'Copy', letter, na., nd., c.1961.

³⁸⁸ BC 586 A2.2, Laurie Geffen to Adrian Leftwich, 25.2.1961; M2, 'Vice-President' to Adrian Leftwich, 25.2.1961.

³⁸⁹ BC 586 M2, 'Copy', letter, na., nd., c.1961.

³⁹⁰ *ibid.*

³⁹¹ BC 586 M2, Clive Rosendorf to Adrian Leftwich, 1.5.1961; Adrian Leftwich to Clive Rosendorf, 8.5.1961.

inclusion as NUSAS vice-president in the delegation selected for the first officially sanctioned NUSAS visit to Turfloop in March 1962, was probably the reason for its sudden last minute cancellation by the Turfloop authorities.³⁹² Ultimately, an all-white NUSAS delegation arrived on the campus on 30 April 1962,³⁹³ sparing the college authorities any headaches regarding either segregation at dinner or the negative influence on the student body of a political hothead expelled for insubordination from a sister tribal college.

This visit had had a long gestation³⁹⁴ before it came to fruition. Through an exchange of correspondence initiated by Shingler in 1960, Potgieter had made it clear that no organisation other than the churches would be welcome on the campus until such time as a student 'esprit de corps' had taken root. Moreover, NUSAS was warned that as one of the most vociferous critics of the new universities, it could not expect to 'organise our students for us'.³⁹⁵ Nonetheless, in October 1961, the new NUSAS president, Leftwich, arrived uninvited at Turfloop but was refused permission to either tour the campus or meet the SRC.³⁹⁶ So in the light of the previous fruitless mission, Leftwich and Denis Hunt were pleasantly surprised at the cordial reception they received from the rector and his academic staff during their April 1962 visit.³⁹⁷ However, all was not as it seemed.³⁹⁸ On their return journey to Pietersburg, Leftwich and Hunt were tricked into stopping their car by white Afrikaans-speaking youth who in a 'sinister' fashion 'reminiscent of the organised and officially approved thuggery of Nazi Germany',³⁹⁹ proceeded to shave their heads with sheep shears, pushed their car off the road, deflated its tyres and hid their keys, thus forcing them to walk the three miles into town.⁴⁰⁰ Many Turfloop students were outraged and embarrassed by the incident and believed that the authorities had had a hand in it but were too afraid to point fingers.⁴⁰¹

The NUSAS delegation received a warm welcome from the Turfloop SRC and student body. Nonetheless it was subjected to an uncompromising interrogation of its policies and what it had to offer African students as well as outright criticism and rejection.⁴⁰² This experience, along with a follow-up visit by the entire Wits SRC to participate in a Turfloop symposium on 'the role of

³⁹² BC 586 A2.2, Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 19.3.1962; M2, 'Galloway' to Adrian Leftwich, 16.3.1962; Adrian Leftwich to 'Galloway', 19.3.1962; Adrian Leftwich to E. Potgieter, 18.4.1962; *Varsity* vol. 11 no. 6, 18.4.1962; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 5, 30.3.1962.

³⁹³ BC 586 M2, Jill Jessop, 'Press Release No. 22: NUSAS Executive Visit to Turfloop', 3.5.1962.

³⁹⁴ BC 586 M2, Ezekiel (Makhene) to Adrian Leftwich, 11.3.1961; Adrian Leftwich to Clive Rosendorff, 16.3.1961.

³⁹⁵ BC 586 M2, E. Potgieter to 'President', 7.3.1960; B1 Presidential Report 1960, p. 28.

³⁹⁶ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 8.11.1961; M2, 'Memo on Visit to Turfloop', 6.11.1961.

³⁹⁷ BC 586 M2, D. Hunt, 'A few notes on two visits to Turfloop', nd.

³⁹⁸ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to Executive, 11.5.1962, p. 9.

³⁹⁹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 9, 11.5.1962.

⁴⁰⁰ BC 586 M2, D. Hunt, 'A few notes on two visits to Turfloop', nd.; Jill Jessop, 'Press Release No. 22: NUSAS Executive Visit to Turfloop', 3.5.1962; A2.2; Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 6.5.1962; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 9, 11.5.1962.

⁴⁰¹ BC 586 M2, D. Hunt, 'A few notes on two visits to Turfloop', nd., pp. 8, 10; Gessler Nkondo to Adrian Leftwich, 4.5.1962.

⁴⁰² *ibid.*; BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 11.5.1962, p. 9; Adrian Leftwich to Gessler Nkondo, 16.6.1962; J.T.C. Sono to M. Stewart, 14.5.1962; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 9, 11.5.1962.

university students in a changing society', had a profound influence on NUSAS which, as discussed earlier, was in the midst of much soul-searching in regard to putting into practice its activist 'student-in-society' position.

Discussion ranged around issues of identity, the relevance of NUSAS to black students in the struggle generally and at the ethnic universities in particular, as well as the trustworthiness and honesty of NUSAS. In what would soon become a painful debate for the predominantly white NUSAS, the student body accepted that whites were 'Africans' too, but evidently the understanding of 'African' remained primarily 'black African'. Turfloop students were concerned that the small number of (black) African students in NUSAS muted the (black) African voice in the organisation and suggested that NUSAS juggle with representation and restructure itself by creating an upper house which would include representatives of all universities.⁴⁰³ NUSAS's response to this recommendation is not recorded but historically and in the future it had and did reject any type of representation that was not based on studentship alone.⁴⁰⁴ The dreaded ethnically based FEDSEC proposals against which NUSAS had fought a secret rearguard battle the year before came up again and again. Surprisingly, it found favour with Gessler Nkondo, president of the SRC, as a pragmatic solution to student unity in the face of NUSAS's proscription at the ethnic universities and hostility to NUSAS amongst Afrikaans-speaking students.⁴⁰⁵ NUSAS was asked how it expected to incorporate black students when it failed even to achieve white student unity, while a suggestion was made that NUSAS focus its attention on the Afrikaans universities with a view to infiltrating them and converting their student bodies.⁴⁰⁶ NUSAS's own student base was considered politically unreliable too as it was composed of students of differing political opinions whose parents moreover had a vested interest in the *status quo*. NUSAS conceded the difficulties of having a radical policy and a conservative membership when, for example, it was pointed out by a Turfloop student that the national union's proposed defense (conscription) policy could lead to divided families and a situation in which a son might even 'spear' his father.⁴⁰⁷

A large number of criticisms were leveled against NUSAS. Nkondo stated that white English-speakers had historically proved themselves hypocritical.⁴⁰⁸ NUSAS was accused of supporting social segregation at the open universities. The Wits SRC's unwilling complicity in this was reinforced some weeks later when it was unable to respond to a suggestion from the Turfloop SRC that the college send an invitation sport team to the Wits campus.⁴⁰⁹ Moreover, it was

⁴⁰³ BC 586 M2, D. Hunt, 'A few notes on two visits to Turfloop', nd., pp. 4, 5, 6.

⁴⁰⁴ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, pp. 55, 56.

⁴⁰⁵ BC 586 M2, D. Hunt, 'A few notes on two visits to Turfloop', nd., pp. 4, 5, 6.

⁴⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴⁰⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 5, 8.

alleged (incorrectly according to an indignant NUSAS) that NUSAS at the ISC had blackballed the newly formed National Union of Basutoland Students,⁴¹⁰ an organisation comprising the student body of the Pius the Twelfth Catholic University College which, to NUSAS's chagrin, had disaffiliated from NUSAS in 1959 for nationalist reasons and then refused to co-operate with NUSAS on a confederal basis. Other students informed NUSAS that it was an ineffectual organisation which could offer nothing to Turfloop students in that it opposed bills which were nonetheless still enacted. Others objected to NUSAS being held responsible for apartheid and argued that Africans had done very little themselves to oppose these measures and that apartheid applied to Africans and that Africans should therefore get up and fight it themselves using a philosophy devised by Africans.⁴¹¹

The leading role of African students in the struggle against apartheid came across very clearly during a joint symposium on 'the role of university students in a changing society' held some weeks later between the Turfloop student body and the full Wits SRC.⁴¹² This symposium was presumably used as a sounding board for African views in the run-up to the 1962 congress which would move NUSAS in a far more radical activist direction. The Wits SRC argued that as intellectuals, students should observe society and criticise. If this was insufficient, students could take a temporary leading role in changing things. The Turfloop student body, on the other hand, argued variously that students as an intellectual elite should either lead or play an active role in the struggle for liberation which for some students could take the form of a violent revolution.⁴¹³ The leading role of students in the liberation movement was entirely consistent with the thinking of national liberation movements on the rest of the African continent and, with the substitution of 'African' for the broader more inclusive 'black', would form the basis of Black Consciousness ideology which would come to dominate the ethnic universities in the future.

In a perceptive weighing up of NUSAS's chances of securing the affiliation of Turfloop to the national union, Denis Hunt, NUSAS international vice-president, noted the growing racial separatism on the campus. Turfloop students realised that they were perceived as sellouts in attending the new ethnic university, but at the same time the college offered the students a degree of shelter from the harshness of apartheid (e.g. the pass laws), adequate subsistence and the possibility of future social mobility. They thus had far more than the majority of their peers. Although politically conscientised students realised the serious deficiencies of the college, it was 'their' college, it appealed to their sense of Africanness and they were intensely proud of it.⁴¹⁴ 'The call of the African to the struggle for his own self-realisation as an individual with dignity is a

⁴¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 4; BC 586 M2, Adrian Leftwich to 'Mr Shongwe' (?) Chris, 8.5.1962.

⁴¹¹ BC 586 M2, D. Hunt, 'A few notes on two visits to Turfloop', nd., p. 6.

⁴¹² BC 586 B1, Neil Callie, 'Report to the 38th NUSAS Assembly, July 1962', p. 4.

⁴¹³ BC 586 M2, D. Hunt, 'A few notes on two visits to Turfloop', nd., p. 8.

⁴¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 9.

strong one and he [sic] must do it himself.⁴¹⁵ As this accorded in many respects with apartheid ideology, 'it suit[ed] the college authorities too'.⁴¹⁶ Hunt thus questioned whether Turfloop students would risk everything they had to affiliate with a proscribed organisation (which some regarded as hypocritical) which could offer them very little in return.⁴¹⁷ It was concluded that most of the student body and largely 'liberally minded' SRC were sympathetic to NUSAS⁴¹⁸ but this was masked by the rhetorical dominance of the chairperson, Nkondo, and some vociferous Africanists looking without much success for a following. Hunt thus concluded that NUSAS could secure an affiliation (and there was talk on the SRC of forming a branch) but to retain it and keep Turfloop students happy would require a full-time NUSAS officer at Wits.⁴¹⁹

Ultimately Turfloop delayed its decision regarding affiliation because, as NUSAS bravely spun it, it was weighing up all its options.⁴²⁰ However, the SRC did attempt to participate in NUSAS's campaign against the Sabotage Bill. A mass meeting was called to discuss the Bill and a decision taken to hold a protest march. However, a group of students became fearful of the consequences and ultimately the march was cancelled much to the crowing delight of Potgieter who had wormed this information out of a cowed SRC after discovering anti-Sabotage Bill graffiti on the college walls.⁴²¹

With the knowledge of Potgieter,⁴²² members of the SRC did attend the 1962 NUSAS congress and executive meeting in their personal capacities.⁴²³ The SRC subsequently endorsed the congress decision to sever all ties with the ASB. This was not an entirely unanimous decision. Nkondo, the fan of FEDSEC, was equivocal while the adherents of the PAC such as Noel Manganyi (later vice-chancellor of Turfloop), felt that the NUSAS resolution did not go far enough as NUSAS SRCs were still free to meet their ASB-affiliated counterparts.⁴²⁴ The ASB, whose Pretoria and Potchefstroom affiliates had been sending out feelers to the Turfloop student body,⁴²⁵ was informed that the SRC would not meet its representatives because of the Afrikaans organisation's support for university apartheid.⁴²⁶ Neither would the SRC host NUSAS during the next two years as each date suggested by the national union for its visit clashed with proposed

⁴¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴¹⁶ *ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ *ibid.*

⁴¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴¹⁹ *ibid.*

⁴²⁰ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 9, 11.5.1962.

⁴²¹ BC 586 M2, D. Hunt, 'A few notes on two visits to Turfloop', nd., p. 3.

⁴²² *ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

⁴²³ BC 586 M2, Gessler Nkondo to Adrian Leftwich, 10.6.1962; 23.10.1962; Adrian Leftwich to Gessler Nkondo, 29.8.1962; B1 Presidential Report 1963, pp. 55-56; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 5, 22.3.1963.

⁴²⁴ BC 586 M2, Derek Bostock to Jonty Driver, 25.6.1963.

⁴²⁵ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1960, p. 10.

⁴²⁶ BC 586 M2, Derek Bostock to Jonty Driver, 25.6.1963; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 13, 7.6.1963.

visits by the PAC-aligned African Students Union of South Africa (ASUSA)⁴²⁷ (discussed later). Despite this apparent brushoff and the apparent leaning towards ASUSA, as well as an attack on NUSAS by Nkondo at the 1962 ASA conference⁴²⁸ (to be discussed later), Nkondo informed NUSAS that the Turfloop SRC was committed to maintaining contact and friendly relations with all student organisations⁴²⁹ and that it moreover was opposed to separatist student structures.⁴³⁰ Despite this reassurance, the student body voted to affiliate to ASUSA in 1963.⁴³¹ Interestingly, by 1963, the Turfloop authorities believed that they were finally winning control over their charges as those responsible for sowing dissension in the ranks and opposing ethnic universities were becoming an increasingly small minority in a largely docile apartheid-accepting student body.⁴³² Despite its successful subordination of the student body and the fact that ASUSA was presented to it not as the student branch of the PAC but as an organisation promoting African educational and cultural advancement,⁴³³ the university authorities, after a long period of deliberation, refused to sanction the official affiliation of Turfloop to ASUSA.

Turfloop's affiliation to ASUSA marked the end of official NUSAS–Turfloop relations for the next few years as well as any hope (largely abandoned as hopeless in 1961) of making the campus unworkable.⁴³⁴ However, informal contact and even campus visits, were maintained by the Wits SRC.⁴³⁵ In addition, a lively exchange of political views was conducted between individual Turfloop ASUSA members such as Max Tlakula, and members of the Wits SRC in the hope that some common ideological ground could be found for retaining student co-operation in areas such as NUSAS's Literacy Project (discussed in chapter nine).⁴³⁶ Despite the Turfloop student body's decision to remain officially aloof from NUSAS, Themba Sono argues that Turfloop students (as well as other ethnic college students) were wholly won over to NUSAS and for most of the 1960s, were the national union's black liberal champions of multi-racialism, integration and academic freedom.⁴³⁷ According to Sono, to Turfloop students, no greater proof of NUSAS's integrity and commitment to black students' welfare and racial integration could be found than in the selfless

⁴²⁷ BC 586 M2, Gessler Nkondo to Adrian Leftwich, 23.10.1962; 2.4.1963; B1 Presidential Report 1963, pp. 55-56; B4.1, Jonty Driver to the Executive, 4.6.1963, p. 1.

⁴²⁸ BC 586 S.24, ASA, 'Minutes of the First Annual Conference of the African Students Association (ASA) held at Durban on the 15th to the 17th December, 1962'.

⁴²⁹ BC 586 M2, Gessler Nkondo to Adrian Leftwich, 23.10.1962.

⁴³⁰ *ibid.*, 7.11.1962.

⁴³¹ BC 586 M2, E.R.W. Makhene to Jonty Driver, 15.11.1963; Jonty Driver to E.R.W. Makhene, 26.11.1963; Alan (Murray) to Jonty (Driver) and Senior Executive, 27.1.1964.

⁴³² C.W. White, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

⁴³³ *ibid.*, p. 101.

⁴³⁴ BC 586 A2.2, na., nd. (Laurie Geffen to Adrian Leftwich), 'Saturday'.

⁴³⁵ D. Hirschmann, 'The Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies* vol. 28 no. 1, 1990, p. 3.

⁴³⁶ BC 586 M2, Max Tlakula to Alan (Murray), 26.3.1963 [sic] 1964; 13.4.1964; Alan (Murray) to Jonty (Driver) and Senior Executive, 27.1.1964; Alan (Murray) to Max (Tlakula), 15.3.1964.

⁴³⁷ T. Sono, *Reflections on the origins of Black Consciousness in South Africa*, HSRC Publishers, Pretoria, 1993, pp. 21-27.

courage of Adrian Leftwich who, on visits to the Turfloop campus⁴³⁸ (deliberately) ate, slept and socialised (danced with as many Turfloop women as possible) and unequivocally and scornfully rejected all aspects of apartheid. Moreover, the fact that NUSAS was banned on the campus and viewed with opprobrium by the college authorities, made it more alluring and desirable.⁴³⁹ However, despite this alleged 'zeal and zest' for NUSAS,⁴⁴⁰ the Turfloop student body and SRC only applied to affiliate to NUSAS in 1968,⁴⁴¹ on the eve of the establishment of a new national, racially exclusive student organisation, the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) (discussed in chapter ten).

The African Students Association (ASA) and the African Students Union of South Africa (ASUSA)

Eight years before the launch of SASO, two new exclusively African student organisations, the ANC-aligned African Students Association (ASA) and the PAC-aligned African Students' Union of South Africa (ASUSA), came into existence. It was stated publicly that ASA originated from a decision taken by Nelson Mandela, that because of the strong support given to the anti-Republican stay-away of May 1961 by African scholars and students, they should be organised into a new African students' movement.⁴⁴²

In actual fact, Walter Sisulu was responsible for ASA's genesis. Sisulu believed that an association of studying youth could be an 'organisational cover' for the banned ANCYL and could provide generational continuity and new recruits to sustain the ANC's new underground existence. So as to 'staunch' the 'haemorrhage'[ing] of young African intellectuals from the Congress tradition to Pan-Africanism, ASA would be, like the ANCYL, open to Africans only. Sisulu entrusted the task of building this new structure to Thabo Mbeki, then a student at SACHED, Johannesburg.⁴⁴³ Shortly before the launch of ASA at UNNE in December 1961, the PAC-aligned students pulled out and inaugurated their own organisation, the African Students' Union of South Africa (ASUSA) in Johannesburg.⁴⁴⁴ ASA's launch on the Day of the Covenant was deliberately scheduled to coincide with the launch of the ANC's sabotage programme although Mbeki insisted that the date was coincidental. He did however accept that the launch of ASA and *Umkhonto We Sizwe* represented 'parallel manifestations of the same impulse'.⁴⁴⁵ South Africa had entered a new phase of struggle, students as an intellectual elite should play a leading

⁴³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴⁴¹ BC 586 M2, Eric Mafuna to 'Mr Innes', 20.8.1968.

⁴⁴² BC 586 S24, 'Message to Students and Youth of South Africa from Nelson Mandela – Honorary Secretary – National Action Council, 11.7.1961'.

⁴⁴³ M. Gevisser, *Thabo Mbeki: the dream deferred*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg and Cape Town, 2007, pp. 142, 144, 145, 146.

⁴⁴⁴ BC 586 S24, Thabo Mbeki, 'Minutes of the Inaugural National Conference of the African Students' Association held in Durban on the 16th and 17th December 1961', p. 3.

⁴⁴⁵ M. Gevisser, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

role in the struggle and one of the tasks of ASA was to find recruits for a liberation army. This could not be done from within the confines of the non-violent NUSAS and thus the establishment of ASA was presented as a breakaway from NUSAS.⁴⁴⁶

NUSAS was not to know any of this, but nonetheless found these new developments within the African student world alarming. It feared that a new (initially one) racially separate African organisation could result firstly, in the exodus of African students from NUSAS, effectively turning the national union into a white body and secondly, as a racially exclusive organisation, ASA could fall into government hands. Despite ASA being a separate African body, Leftwich, following current liberal opinion, believed that ASA, like the All-In conference was a creation of both the SACP, which was operating quite openly in Lesotho, and NUSAS's old enemy, COD. One of ASA's aims, Leftwich believed, was to embarrass and weaken the militant, anti-colonial but non-communist NUSAS by drawing off its black members and painting it moderate and white. His suspicions were inferred from the fact that COD was playing a very proactive role in organising the youth, that *New Age* was aggressively championing ASA, that the call for ASA came from Nelson Mandela, believed to represent the extreme left wing of the ANC, that the organising secretary, Thabo Mbeki, was ideologically close to his SACP stalwart father, Govan, and that the first public announcement of the existence of ASA had been made at the 1961 NUSAS congress.⁴⁴⁷

Despite these reservations NUSAS recognised the need for an organisation which could cater for high school children not eligible for NUSAS membership. NUSAS hoped to win dual membership of NUSAS and ASA and at the same time debated amending its constitution to allow student bodies like ASA, the SCA and NCFS to become associate members of the national union.⁴⁴⁸ During a number of meetings with the ASA Preparatory Committee and through correspondence with Thabo Mbeki before the launch, Leftwich and the executive discussed the future basis of co-operation between NUSAS and ASA. Mbeki and most of the Preparatory Committee members were very accommodating and in fact 'wanted NUSAS at the official level'⁴⁴⁹ but were not prepared to commit to anything which could drive the Africanists from the organisation.⁴⁵⁰

Shortly before the ASA launch, NUSAS's invitation to attend was withdrawn and not in so many words informed by Mbeki that, were NUSAS members to participate, they should be African and should avoid courting controversy.⁴⁵¹ NUSAS was not happy with this situation but nonetheless

⁴⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁴⁷ BC 586 S24, Adrian Leftwich, 'Assessment of African Students' Association in terms of history, structure, apparent orientation and planned activities', 27.2.1962, pp. 8-10.

⁴⁴⁸ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 8.11.1961, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁴⁹ BC 586 S24, Thabo Mbeki to Adrian Leftwich, 4.12.1961; B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 8.11.1961, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁵⁰ BC 586 S24, Adrian Leftwich to Mike Ngubeni, 14.11.1961; Thabo Mbeki to Adrian Leftwich, 4.12.1961.

⁴⁵¹ BC 586 S24, Thabo Mbeki to Adrian Leftwich, 4.12.1961.

sent Mhlambiso, its vice-president, to the inaugural Durban congress.⁴⁵² Once there, Mhlambiso ended up chairing a number of sittings⁴⁵³ and was then nominated for the ASA presidency too. This position he declined, the presidency going to Ernest Galo, expelled from Fort Hare in 1960 for his activities on the 1959 SRC⁴⁵⁴ and subsequently vice-president of the UNNE SRC and a champion there of UNNE's re-affiliation to NUSAS in 1960/1.⁴⁵⁵

The ASA inaugural conference passed an 'apartheid and education' resolution similar to that of NUSAS's, congratulated Albert Luthuli on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, saluted African students for their 'courageous' role during the inauguration of the Republic, hailed the independence of Tanzania and a possible peaceful settlement in Algeria, and offered its support to all 'African struggles against all forms of foreign domination'.⁴⁵⁶ In other words, policies not dissimilar to, nor more overtly political nor radical than those of NUSAS. What did distinguish ASA from NUSAS was the message from the ANC underground notifying the conference that it was responsible for the sabotage attacks the night before.⁴⁵⁷

Of particular importance to NUSAS was the long and unresolved debate regarding membership of ASA.⁴⁵⁸ It was reported that some students at the multi-racial UNNE and Fort Hare (the latter where the ANCYL was multi-racial)⁴⁵⁹ believed ASA was racist in restricting its membership to effectively black 'Africans'⁴⁶⁰ and that the colour of ASA membership was immaterial if it abided by the aims of the organisation. Moreover, some delegates expressed the opinion that there were students of races other than black who could be regarded as 'African'. Those who stated they could not accept domination by other races rejected this view. Ultimately the constitution made no reference to either race or African origins as criteria for membership of ASA with the understanding that most delegates wanted ASA to be an 'African' organisation and that the new executive formulate its understanding of 'African'.⁴⁶¹ Despite these propitious events, no policy regarding ASA's relationship with NUSAS was adopted at the conference because ASA wanted to

⁴⁵² BC 586 S24, Adrian Leftwich, 'Assessment of African Students' Association in terms of history, structure, apparent orientation and planned activities', 27.2.1962, p. 5.

⁴⁵³ BC 586 S24, Thami Mhlambiso, 'Report on the African Students' Association Conference held in Durban, 16th – 17th December, 1961', p. 2.

⁴⁵⁴ BC 586 S24, Alan Murray to SRC Presidents, 3.1.1964.

⁴⁵⁵ BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 5.10.1961; S24, 'Darkie Sebopedi (Regional Secretary of Natal) to Fellow Students of UNNE', 19.10.1964.

⁴⁵⁶ BC 586 S24, 'Minutes of the Inaugural National Conference of the African Students' Association held in Durban on the 16th and 17th December 1961', p. 5.

⁴⁵⁷ M. Gevisser, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

⁴⁵⁸ BC 586 S24, Thami Mhlambiso, 'Report on the African Students' Association Conference held in Durban, 16th -17th December, 1961', p. 4.

⁴⁵⁹ 'Stanley Mabizela April 19, 1999 Cape Town Interview by Danny Massey', p. 5, www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpages/DC/oral19990419 accessed 22.11.2012.

⁴⁶⁰ BC 586 S24, Thabo Mbeki, 'Secretarial Report of the Organising Secretary of the African Students Association', p. 2; 'Minutes of the Inaugural National Conference of the African Students' Association held in Durban on the 16th and 17th December 1961', p. 3.

⁴⁶¹ BC 586 S24, Thami Mhlambiso, 'Report on the African Students' Association Conference held in Durban, 16th -17th December, 1961', p. 4.

effect a rapprochement with the Africanists.⁴⁶² Although this was not specifically discussed at the ASA launch, but was later, ASA had a stake in co-operating with NUSAS as NUSAS was regarded as South Africa's national union and as such was a member of a number of international student organisations, a status ASA could probably not achieve by itself.⁴⁶³

At the end of 1961, NUSAS sent some SACHED recruitment pamphlets to ASA to distribute to matriculants considering entering the ethnic universities. Although Mbeki believed that their denunciation of university apartheid was excellent, he refused to have them distributed as this would create the impression (presumably to the Africanists and ASUSA) that ASA was the 'mouthpiece' of NUSAS.⁴⁶⁴ ASUSA had decided at its launch that no co-operation with the non-'indigenous' NUSAS would be tolerated and further, that dual membership of the two organisations would result in expulsion from ASUSA.⁴⁶⁵

On the other hand, ASA accepted an invitation to attend NUSAS's annual congress in July 1962 but due to a communication failure, no official observers arrived.⁴⁶⁶ So in the absence of ASA, the NUSAS assembly passed a resolution proposed by a SACHED student, Abel Zwane. This welcomed both the formation of ASA and its non-racial policy, but regretted that circumstances necessitated it being racially exclusive and as such accepted that ASA did not regard itself as a national union of students.⁴⁶⁷ This last section infuriated ASA, which at its annual congress held in December 1962, passed a motion of censure on NUSAS condemning it for 'try[ing] to accord a status of inferiority upon ASA'.⁴⁶⁸ Many delegates expressed the opinion that dual membership of ASA and NUSAS should be prohibited but ultimately no decision was taken thereon.⁴⁶⁹ Nor was any taken about the definition of 'African'. Many delegates felt that an exclusively racial definition would exclude Africans north of the Sahara. Both of these issues had a bearing on the main topic of debate, namely, the failure to achieve African student unity in the face of the still unresolved rift with ASUSA.⁴⁷⁰

To patch up its relations with ASA, NUSAS amended the offending clauses of its 1962 congress resolution. It explained that it considered ASA to be neither inferior, subsidiary, nor an alternative to NUSAS, that the two organisations were independent and autonomous, and were neither

⁴⁶² BC 586 S24, Thabo Mbeki to the NUSAS President, 30.12.1961.

⁴⁶³ BC 586 S24, Adrian Leftwich, 'Discussions with African Students' Association executive, 8th April, 1962, in Durban.'

⁴⁶⁴ BC 586 S24, Thabo Mbeki to NUSAS President, 30.12.1961; Adrian Leftwich to Thabo Mbeki, 5.1.1962.

⁴⁶⁵ BC 586 S19, 'Inaugural Conference of the African Students' Union of South Africa held on the 16th and 17th December 1961 at the Bantu Men's Social Centre in Johannesburg'.

⁴⁶⁶ BC 586 S24, Roslyn Traub to Ernest (Galo), 21.6.1962; Adrian Leftwich to Ernest Galo, 1.8.1962.

⁴⁶⁷ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1962, pp. 57-58.

⁴⁶⁸ BC 586 S24, 'Resolutions', nd.

⁴⁶⁹ BC 586 S24, 'Minutes of the First Annual Conference of the African Students' Association (A.S.A.) held in Durban on the 15th to the 17th Dec. 1962', p. 3.

⁴⁷⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

complementary nor in opposition to one another.⁴⁷¹ NUSAS still attempted to build a close relationship with ASA both at an organisational level as well as through joint participation in specific projects.⁴⁷² At a personal level, ASA leaders expressed their sympathy with the NUSAS leadership, which because of the national union's conservative membership, was unable to advance its radical policies. Relations between NUSAS and Mbeki were friendly too. At a meeting at Fort Hare, the visiting Mbeki took to the floor and quickly made short change out of some students attacking NUSAS.⁴⁷³ The ANC, to which ASA was aligned, was also critically sympathetic. This was demonstrated in the case of the decision of Mhlambiso to resign from NUSAS after being called a 'Matamzima' by anti-NUSAS Africanist students in Basutoland and his feeling that NUSAS posed an obstacle to African student unity. The ANC prevailed on him not to leave the national union as it did 'not want to create a political vacuum by blotting NUSAS out of existence',⁴⁷⁴ presumably because it believed that ASA could not achieve very much. Most of ASA's energy was expended fruitlessly on patching up its relationship with ASUSA. Mbeki did embark on a countrywide ASA tour in 1962, and during a secret meeting at Fort Hare informed students from both Fort Hare and Lovedale that the liberation movement was offering a limited number of scholarships for overseas study, but that it was the wish of the movement that the majority remained at school and university to finish their courses. However, Barney Pityana, then at Lovedale, believed that Mbeki was in fact putting out feelers for potential recruits to *Umkhonto We Sizwe*.⁴⁷⁵

By late-1963, ASA was facing an organisational crisis. Starved of funds, unable to make headway at the ASUSA strongholds of Turfloop⁴⁷⁶ or Ngoye,⁴⁷⁷ its annual conference hindered by the police, its leadership depleted (many were in prison,⁴⁷⁸ including founding member Mike Ngubeni for sabotage⁴⁷⁹ and Ernest Galo had fled South Africa⁴⁸⁰ and subsequently died) – ASA effectively abandoned the universities and considered amalgamating with NUSAS.⁴⁸¹ At Galo's funeral, attended by Driver and Osler of the NUSAS executive, Driver was invited to deliver a speech.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷¹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, pp. 67-68; S24, Jonty Driver to S.M. Bopape, 26.3.1963; Jonty Driver to Ernest Galo, 30.7.1963.

⁴⁷² BC 586 S24, Adrian Leftwich to Ernest Galo, 3.5.1962; 'Notes on a meeting with "States" Bopape, senior executive member of ASA', nd.

⁴⁷³ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

⁴⁷⁴ BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 29.4.1962, pp. iii-iv.

⁴⁷⁵ M. Gevisser, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

⁴⁷⁶ BC 586 S24, Jonty Driver, 'Notes On A Meeting With "States" Bopape, Senior Executive Member Of The African Students' Association', 11.5.1964.

⁴⁷⁷ BC 586 A2.2, Maeder Osler to Jonty Driver, 13.3.1964, p. 3.

⁴⁷⁸ BC 586 S24, Jonty Driver to Mike Ngubeni, 31.1.1964; U2, Jonty Driver to Martin (Legassick) and James (White), 17.4.1964, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁹ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1964*, p. 95.

⁴⁸⁰ BC 586 S24, Alan Murray to SRC Presidents, 3.1.1964.

⁴⁸¹ BC 586 S24, Jonty Driver, 'Notes On A Meeting With "States" Bopape, Senior Executive Member Of The African Students' Association', 11.5.1964.

⁴⁸² Jonty Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', Unpublished memoir, p. 18; Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

In 1965, ASA rallied.⁴⁸³ Attempts were made by the Turfloop SRC to revive the moribund ASUSA too,⁴⁸⁴ but this was abandoned when only a few students turned up at a conference for this purpose staged in Johannesburg in December 1965.⁴⁸⁵ Three years later the Turfloop student body shelved its bid to secure official approval for its affiliation to ASUSA and applied for membership of NUSAS (discussed in chapter ten). ASA continued to attract a secret following at Fort Hare until the end of the 1960s. ASA adherents at Fort Hare were largely middle-class 'southerners' still steeped in the liberal missionary educational tradition. Their northern working class counterparts were, by contrast, adherents of black assertiveness.⁴⁸⁶ ASA remained committed to the non-racialism of the ANC and thus students aligned to ASA at Fort Hare and other campuses would initially have no truck with the emerging Black Consciousness movement.⁴⁸⁷ Some ASA adherents were eventually won over to the new ideology by the partially inclusive and non-racial definition of 'black' which included not only Africans, but also coloureds and Indians too,⁴⁸⁸ and/or were instrumental in its formulation. However, this was in the future.

In the early 1960s NUSAS was required to respond to the ideological and organisational challenge posed to it by ASA as well as meet the needs and interests of black students in an effort to win and maintain their loyalty. Thus NUSAS afforded an increasingly leading role to its black membership in setting the pace and direction of NUSAS policy. This led to serious reflection within the national union regarding its role within the increasingly oppressive, polarised and hopeless environment of post-Sharpeville South Africa. And, accordingly, a review of NUSAS's policy, structure and level of activism, was undertaken. In 1962, as discussed in chapter six, NUSAS finally for all practical purposes jettisoned its 'student-as-such' orientation. Accordingly, it committed itself to putting into practice the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and pursuing an activist policy aimed at opposing apartheid in all its spheres. In so doing it moved beyond the mere rhetoric and pious resolutions for which radical critics had condemned NUSAS in the past.

NUSAS thus focused on more practical projects. The Transkei literacy project, funded by the United States NSA (and thus the CIA) and co-ordinated by Templeton Mdalana, Fort Hare graduate and ANC activist, was launched in 1963.⁴⁸⁹ This took NUSAS away from its traditional terrain of mainly white university campuses and into the rural areas of black South Africans. (This

⁴⁸³ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, Fort Hare Local Committee Chairman, 'National Union of South African Students: 1965 Student Assembly at UCT: Report of the Fort Hare Branch'; Congress Minutes 1965, p. 68.

⁴⁸⁴ BC 586 M2, S.M. Ramokgopa to 'Sir' (SACHED, Cape Town), 5.8.1965.

⁴⁸⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1966, p. 62; *NUSAS Newsletter* no. 3 1965/6, 28.2.1966, p. 37.

⁴⁸⁶ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, pp. 208, 210.

⁴⁸⁷ *ibid.*; T. Sono, *op. cit.* p. 30.

⁴⁸⁸ T. Sono, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁴⁸⁹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, pp. 76-77.

is discussed in more detail in chapter nine.) It was hoped that the literacy project would be the avenue through which contact and co-operation with ASA and ASUSA could be pursued.⁴⁹⁰

Although aimed at identifying and grooming a new generation of radical NUSAS cadres, the NUSAS regional and national seminars, inaugurated in 1963, again with US NSA funding,⁴⁹¹ provided an opportunity for black students, particularly those at the ethnic universities and associated with ASA and ASUSA, to participate in NUSAS structures and lead the process of new policy formulation.⁴⁹² Once policy so arrived at was accepted by NUSAS cadres, a period of intense political education of the student bodies of the NUSAS-affiliated centres would follow. Thereafter, the proposed new policy would be introduced in the student assembly to be discussed and adopted by the SRC representatives there, who, in many instances, were neither radical nor NUSAS activists. In other words, policy-making would and did become even less of the preserve of the student assembly, the SRCs and student bodies it represented. Black students, many not formally affiliated to NUSAS and perhaps not even particularly sympathetic to the organisation, came to play a significant role in the formulation of NUSAS policy.

Linked to the important policy-making role of black students, was the issue of Africanisation. Africanisation of NUSAS was a necessity if the national union was to meet the challenge posed to it by competing African student organisations as well as the concerns of the Turfloop student body that the black voice in NUSAS was muted. Moreover, in the context of decolonisation, particularly in Africa, NUSAS would need to present itself as representative of the majority of South Africa's population and not as a white body (discussed in later chapters). However, Africanisation of its leadership was a thorny issue for colour-blind liberals and also smacked of tokenism. Africanisation also faced serious practical obstacles in its implementation. NUSAS offered Mhlambiso the presidency in 1962 but he declined as he realised that holding such a position under apartheid conditions was impossible for an African at that time.⁴⁹³ For example the application of the Coloured Labour Preference Area Policy in the Western Cape precluded an African even taking up office at NUSAS's headquarters in Cape Town. In addition, Mhlambiso had been shown the door at JCE when, as NUSAS vice-president, he had attempted to address the student body there. His inclusion in the NUSAS delegation to Turfloop in 1962 was probably the reason for the cancellation of the visit by the college authorities. The 1963 NUSAS vice-president was Kenny Parker, a coloured UCT student sympathetic to the ANC, but with a useful background in the anti-NUSAS Unity Movement.⁴⁹⁴ In many respects, Africanisation seemed to be driven by

⁴⁹⁰ BC 586 M2, Alan (Murray) to 'Jonty and Senior Executive', 27.1.1964.

⁴⁹¹ BC 586 Maeder Osler to Dave (Adler), 30.3.1965.

⁴⁹² *ibid.*; BC 586 U2, Jonty Driver to Martin (Legassick) and James (White), 17.4.1964, p. 6.

⁴⁹³ BC 586 U2, Jonty Driver to Martin (Legassick) and James (White), 17.4.1964, p. 7.

⁴⁹⁴ Jonty Driver to Thami Mhlambiso, 31.1.1963.

the traditional white middle-class radical leadership leaving the impression that black students would still not really lead the organisation.

Despite the shortcomings of Africanisation, the presence on the NUSAS executive of Mhlambiso, a leading member of the ANCYL, in addition to close co-operation with the Youth League-led Fort Hare resistance and the NIYC and ANC at UNNE, could but only have drawn NUSAS closer to the ANC and the Indian Congresses and influenced the direction of the national union's policy. By the mid-1960s, NUSAS appeared to view the ANC as a broad church composed of different ideological strands. The non-communist, non-Africanist component of the ANC, as epitomised by NUSAS's honorary president, Albert Luthuli, was regarded by NUSAS as an ally. In a similar vein, the ANC seemed to view NUSAS, which with the LP was the most radical organisation still functioning legally in South Africa by 1962, as a useful instrument for partially filling the political vacuum left by the banning of the liberation movements. The very tentative suggestion by ASA in 1964 that the moribund university section of ASA merge with NUSAS implied that NUSAS would fill the space left by the ANCYL which ASA had been created to fill in the first place. This type of thinking would be crystallised in a proposal that NUSAS transform itself into the student section of the liberation movement, presumably the ANC's. Even before this scenario was debated within NUSAS forums, the topic of chapter nine, NUSAS had become too radical for the state to tolerate. In late 1963, Vorster fired the first shot in the government's campaign to silence NUSAS without actually banning it. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

By 1966, NUSAS had failed to secure the official affiliation of any student body at any of the newly created ethnic universities while its relationship with Fort Hare students was far more tenuous than it had been in 1960. This can be explained by the proscription of NUSAS by the government authorities on all campuses under its control and the authoritarian and repressive environment prevailing at all institutions. The degree of oppression was greater at Fort Hare than elsewhere, where the task of moulding a compliant, docile, tribalised student body was more difficult given the college's independent, liberal, missionary, multi-racial history. The banning of the liberation movements in 1960, followed by the national security crackdown in 1963, intensified the levels of repression on all campuses. Again, repression was more severe at Fort Hare than anywhere else because a core of ANC and PAC student activists were (or were suspected of) promoting radical change and participating in the Eastern Cape uprising. Thus any gains which NUSAS had made at the new universities by 1963, as, for example, in the establishment of the underground 'Island Students' Association' at Salisbury Island, were reversed. Membership of NUSAS at Fort Hare dropped dramatically to a fraction of the student body in the mid-1960s. Ironically though, for a short time, the national union achieved far more influence on the Eastern Cape campus than ever

before. In the void left by the banning of the liberation movements, the proscription of all political activity and the absence of an SRC, the underground NUSAS Local Committee assumed the campus leadership role. With the exception of Fort Hare, where this became intertwined with 'the resistance', NUSAS's campaign under Leftwich to make the new universities unworkable came to little. Though incidents concerning the abrogation of student rights were identified at Salisbury Island and Ngoye, these were not escalated to provoke a confrontation, the first step to unworkability. Students at the new ethnic colleges were ignorant of the characteristics of other universities and often unpoliticised too. Many were reasonably satisfied with college life – and some rectors, like Cook at Ngoye, were shrewd enough to cultivate an environment of relative contentment – and thus saw no reason to engage in political actions initiated by an organisation of which many were distrustful. Moreover, these actions had questionable chances of success and could lead to expulsion from the university and an end to any future prospects of a career and social mobility. Nonetheless, all ethnic college students vehemently resented the application of social apartheid on their campuses and the disdain with which many white staff members treated them, as well as the use of Afrikaans as the *de facto* campus *lingua franca*. It could be argued that the catalyst for the Soweto Uprising in 1976, namely, the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, had its origins at the new ethnic universities because graduates of these institutions would then enter the schools as teachers. Pointers to the future emergence of a separate black student organisation, like SASO, as a pragmatic means of forging contact with students at other black educational institutions also prohibited from participating in NUSAS, is discernible at Turfloop during the 1960s. So too - in the expression by some Turfloop and Ngoye students of an assertive Africanism and a suspicion of white liberals – is the development of the racially exclusive Black Consciousness philosophy and the refusal of its adherents to co-operate with the white liberal NUSAS. The establishment of the racially exclusive ASA and ASUSA, organisations which prefigured SASO, and which posed a challenge to NUSAS's hegemony both nationally and internationally, was one of the most important reasons for NUSAS embracing a more explicitly activist role and then in 1964 undertaking a fundamental re-evaluation of its role in working towards a new democratic non-racial South Africa.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Nationalist assault on NUSAS and the establishment of the Federation of Conservative Students, 1963-1964

Introduction

The mid-1960s were years of crisis and turmoil for NUSAS. In a bid to engineer the eventual demise of what was by then one of the most radical organisations still operating legally in South Africa, the state and its allies initiated a full-scale offensive against NUSAS in 1963. Through relentless McCarthyist anti-communist tactics, John Vorster, the Minister of Justice and his allies on the far-right (the Hertzog Group) hoped to smear NUSAS so completely that NUSAS's moderate student base would be sliced out from under it. This would free up a significant body of white English-speaking students who, it was realised, could be organised into new campus conservative societies and eventually incorporated into the *Afrikaanse Studentebond* (ASB) as the long dreamed of English Student Bond. This offensive formed part of the general security clampdown aimed at eliminating any remaining left wing dissent in South Africa, but was also a response to favourable developments on the NUSAS campuses which were exploited by the state and its allies for their own purposes. Since Sharpeville and the enactment of university apartheid, white English-speaking students, like white English-speakers generally, were believed to have moved to the right. Moreover, the ideological gap between the NUSAS leadership and its mass student base was widening as NUSAS pursued an ever more all-embracing, activist, anti-apartheid policy in response to the demands of its radical and black membership and developments both inside South Africa and abroad.

The 1963 congress and the continuing radicalisation of policy

Although Driver, NUSAS's outspoken president, acknowledged that the pursuit of a non-racial South Africa was becoming progressively more difficult to champion in the face of new government laws and prohibitions, the NUSAS congress of 1963 at Wits continued in the same radical vein as its deeply divisive predecessor. Maintaining a close watch over assembly deliberations for the Indian Congresses, and telling assembly delegates how to think, was an observer from the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress, Essop Pahad.¹ Pahad was a student at Wits and later Thabo Mbeki's right hand man both in exile and in the post-apartheid government.² Present too was a 'representative' of the PAC who referred to those who were not black Africans as 'settlers' and 'by-products of the settlers'.³ The controversial

¹ Gavin Williams via email, 26.11.2014.

² R. Calland, *Anatomy of South Africa: who holds the power?*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2006, pp. 18-19.

³ Gavin Williams via email, 26.11.2014.

'degree motion' of 1962 was revisited. This had led to an attempted disaffiliation at Rhodes and general dissatisfaction amongst students and the interested public concerned that NUSAS's actions would provide the catalyst for an AAM boycott of South African graduates.⁴ From NUSAS's investigations, it was apparent that some overseas academic bodies were concerned about falling standards within South African universities,⁵ but nonetheless, there was little likelihood of South African qualifications not being accredited.⁶ Despite this reassurance, many students felt that NUSAS should remain silent on the subject and let sleeping dogs lie.⁷ NUSAS felt however that it would be failing in its duty to do so.⁸ Thus Roger Jowell and Mhlambiso, presidents of the UCT and UNNE SRCs respectively, moved that the 1962 resolution be re-affirmed but reformulated in an unambiguous fashion as it had 'been grossly misinterpreted'.⁹ During a heated three hour debate, Hugh Kowarsky, the PP-aligned Wits SRC president and the conservative Michael Chapman of Rhodes, attempted to have NUSAS's investigation into South African degrees confined to South Africa alone. This amendment was narrowly defeated and the original Jowell-Mhlambiso motion carried by thirty seven votes to nineteen with fourteen abstentions.¹⁰

Severing all ties with the ASB at the 1962 Congress had also generated much unhappiness within NUSAS's ranks. Rhodes and the PP-orientated JCE were actively pursuing white co-operation: in the former by hosting inter-SRC meetings and in the latter by participating in the *Transvaal Onderwys Kollege Studente Unie* (TOKSU). The debate on the ASB was thus re-opened. With the exception of a radical minority at Wits, it was agreed that NUSAS would continue its practice of inviting the ASB to its congresses and executive meetings even though the ASB had made co-operation with NUSAS impossible. Finding less favour with the white co-operation campuses was the decision to exploit the dissatisfaction of many students with the ASB at the Afrikaans-medium universities and attempt to establish NUSAS branches there like the one recently founded at Stellenbosch.¹¹

Generating by far the most conflict and division at the congress was the proposal that NUSAS apply for observer status to the Soviet-aligned International Union of Students (IUS) from which it had disaffiliated in 1955. In the light of the Cold War and escalating anti-communism domestically, this was a naïve and dangerous policy revision. Nonetheless, the

⁴ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 16, 2.8.1963.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Kenneth Parker to *Trend*, 20.8.1963.

⁸ *ibid.*; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 16, 2.8.1963.

⁹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 50.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 51-52; *Rhodeo* vol. 17 no. 12, 1.8.1963; no. 14, 15.8.1963; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 16, 2.8.1963.

¹¹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, pp. 28-29; *Rhodeo* vol. 17 no. 12, 1.8.1963; no. 14, 15.8.1963, *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 16, 2.8.1963; no. 18, 16.8.1963.

NUSAS leadership had been quietly preparing the ground for such an eventuality. In the capacity of an 'unofficial NUSAS representative', Martin Legassick was secretly permitted to 'feel out the situation' at the controversial World Festival of Youth and Students co-hosted by the IUS and the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) in Helsinki in 1962.¹² The following year NUSAS decided that its own National Youth Movement, which it intended launching with other youth bodies, would be co-sponsored, both materially and otherwise, by both the WFDY and the Western-aligned World Assembly of Youth (WAY).¹³ Moreover, it was agreed that NUSAS could participate in a purely practical project with the IUS, but this explosive piece of information was kept from the training colleges, many of which were threatening disaffiliation.¹⁴ In seeking observer status it was perhaps following the example of its former international relations standard bearer, NUS, which, although leaving the IUS shortly before NUSAS, had continued to send observers to IUS gatherings.

The international student world had changed substantially since 1955 when the anti/non-communist International Student Conference (ISC), dominated by student unions from the Western democracies, coldly ignored their Eastern counterpart, the IUS, composed of students from the communist second world. In the interim, student bodies from the newly independent states of Asia and Africa joined the ISC and were instrumental in transforming it from its 'students-as-such' position and Western bias to a more activist and international orientation. Many of these student unions in the developing world adopted a non-aligned position in the Cold War by belonging to both the IUS¹⁵ and ISC, but at the same time seeking international student co-operation outside these structures. In this they could be seen to be following in the footsteps of those heads of independent states (including those from India, Indonesia, Ghana, Algeria, Congo (Leopoldville), the United Arab Republic and Cuba) who attended the Belgrade Summit of 1961 which inaugurated what became the Non-Aligned Movement. In March 1963, the National Students' Union of Tunisia hosted a seminar to discuss the means of achieving student co-operation outside Cold War student structures¹⁶ and a Round Table Conference in Africa was mooted to take this idea further.¹⁷ Of concern to NUSAS was the greater affinity of some unions, particularly in Africa, to the IUS rather than the ISC. NUSAS was part of Africa and the developing world and needed to align itself to the aspirations of these students. It needed to initiate and build relations with

¹² BC 586 U2, Adrian Leftwich to Martin Legassick, 8.5.1962; 6.6.1962; Martin Legassick to Adrian Leftwich, 22.5.1962.

¹³ BC 586 T60, Kenny Parker to 'The President of the African Students' Association', 30.5.1963.

¹⁴ BC 586 A2.1, 'President' (Jonty Driver) to Derek Bostock, 19.2.1963.

¹⁵ BC 586 U2, Jonty Driver to Martin Legassick, 26.11.1963.

¹⁶ BC 586 B1 1963, Jonty Driver, 'Working Paper: The International Seminar on the Structures of the International Student Movement and the Means of Realising Universal Co-operation Organised by UGET Tunisia, 23-27 March, 1963', pp. 1-7.

¹⁷ BC 586 B1 Report of the International Vice-President 1963', 1964, Addendum 11, p. 83.

African students and those in the developing world generally and as such would require some form of participation in all international student forums.

NUSAS's disaffiliation from the IUS was one of the reasons cited by black students for their disaffiliation from NUSAS in the 1950s.¹⁸ International partisanship was less marked amongst black students of the 1960s than it was amongst their 1950 counterparts, but could still provoke conflict and division. For example, NUSAS worried about the repercussions at UNNE of its siding with India against China in a border dispute.¹⁹ The radical and difficult SACHED branch was in direct contact with the IUS and was asking a lot of tricky questions about NUSAS's foreign policy. NUSAS feared that SACHED would 'go too fast and mess up [NUSAS's] careful[ly laid] tactical plans' of 'a gradual rapprochement' with the IUS.²⁰ SACHED's actions perhaps forced NUSAS's hand with the result that the IUS issue was addressed sooner than NUSAS would have liked.

The fierce two hour debate on seeking observer status of the IUS²¹ was opened by Jonty Driver who argued that 'although he "hated" the IUS' he supported the idea of a conditional and negotiated observer status for NUSAS. NUSAS, he believed 'should follow the example of the Catholic and Protestant Churches, both of which sent observers to their respective conferences'.²² Robert Molteno of UCT said that 'NUSAS had a duty to maintain contact with other students' and in a bid to appease the right, added that observing the IUS in action lent NUSAS the ideal opportunity of 'see[ing] just how dishonest' the IUS was.²³ For those like Raymond Suttner who would support such a motion in the future, it was not a 'very ideological decision' but 'was basically a question of even handedness' in that a 'vacuum' existed on the left with the proscription of the liberation movements.²⁴

Wits, JCE and Rhodes tried to delay this drastic policy change by suggesting that NUSAS discuss its differences with the IUS rather than negotiating observer status.²⁵ Were the proposed motion passed, Wits SRC president, Kowarsky (later a lawyer in Israel) argued, it would create the impression 'that NUSAS was taking a step towards communist affiliation' and in so doing 'would ... imperil... [its] very existence'. These sentiments were echoed by Rhodes.²⁶ The amendment was lost by twenty one to forty votes,²⁷ following which Durban

¹⁸ C. Larkin, 'Becoming liberal - a history of the National Union of South African Students: 1945 to 1955', MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2001, pp. 115-117, 152.

¹⁹ BC 586 B4.1, Jonty Driver to the Executive, "Events of January 1963" nd., p. 2.

²⁰ BC 586 A2.2, Jonty Driver to Kenny Parker, 16.4.1963, p. 2.

²¹ *Nux*, 16.8.1963.

²² *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 16, 2.8.1963.

²³ *ibid.*; *Nux*, 16.8.1963.

²⁴ Raymond Suttner via email, 2.12.2014. Suttner is not listed in the 1963 Congress Minutes as a delegate but was in the following few years.

²⁵ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 138; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 17, 9.8.1964.

²⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 16, 2.8.1963.

attempted unsuccessfully to halt the vote on the original motion.²⁸ Eventually the assembly decided by thirty six to twenty one that the NUSAS president be empowered to negotiate observer status with IUS officials under stringent conditions imposed by the national union.²⁹ For many assembly delegates, this change of policy meant that 'NUSAS was doomed'.³⁰ One student felt - and this was probably the feeling of many others - that were NUSAS to send observers to the IUS Congress, it would be banned.³¹ He was partially right. The IUS motion would provide the big stick with which the state and its allies would beat NUSAS some months later.

Another line of attack which the state would use against NUSAS was its profession of 'Pan-Africanism'. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was inaugurated in May 1963 in Addis Ababa shortly before the NUSAS Congress. The OAU pledged itself to work towards the political and economic unity of the African continent and *inter alia* to fight colonialism by co-ordinating national liberation movements. In the case of the latter, it specifically targeted white minority regimes and thus called for the implementation of all-embracing, Africa-wide sanctions on both South Africa and Portugal.³² To coincide with the inauguration of the OAU, a Pan African Students' Seminar, partially paid for by the IUS,³³ was scheduled for the latter part of 1963 to which NUSAS was invited. Thus, NUSAS required firstly, a mandate from the assembly to pursue Pan-African student unity and secondly, as a predominantly white organisation, needed to pin its colours firmly to the mast of Pan-Africanism so as to establish its credentials with potentially hostile African student unions. As importantly, ASA and ASUSA, composed of South Africa's African majority, posed a serious challenge to NUSAS's claim to be South Africa's national student union. NUSAS described 'Pan-Africanism' as 'loyalty to the African continent', economic control by Africans for Africans, and 'political and economic unity of the African continent'. An 'African' was described non-racially as someone 'who owe[d] allegiance to the continent of Africa' and controversially in the South African political context, one 'who accept[ed] majority rule by the people of Africa'.³⁴ Pan-Africanism was adopted without dissent and with only nine abstentions.³⁵ This was remarkable (and an assembly delegate who does not remember this debate concurs³⁶) considering that firstly, the assembly effectively endorsed 'one person one vote' which as a policy was not acceptable to many PP-aligned NUSAS delegates and secondly, even more controversially,

²⁷ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 138.

²⁸ *Nux*, 16.8.1963; BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 138.

²⁹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 139.

³⁰ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 16, 2.8.1963.

³¹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 139.

³² V.B. Thompson, *Africa and unity: the evolution of Pan-Africanism*, Longman, London, 1977, pp. 183-185.

³³ BC 586 U2, Jonty Driver to Martin Legassick, 26.11.1963.

³⁴ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 132

³⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 131-132.

³⁶ Gavin Williams via email, 26.11.2014.

the definitions of 'Pan-Africanism' and an 'African' were also those of the banned PAC,³⁷ though an addendum stated that the motion did not imply support for the PAC.

Being as much of a red rag to a bull in the eyes of the state was the re-election of Albert Luthuli as the honorary president of NUSAS. He was again hailed as a South African embodying the spirit of non-racialism and as the only African to have won the Nobel Peace prize.³⁸ The Durban delegation walked out of the assembly however, when their candidate for honorary president, Archbishop Dennis Hurley was turned down.³⁹

The 1963 Congress marked the first occasion during which the delegates went on a public protest march. During the assembly proceedings, three hundred pupils from Fordsburg Indian High School burst into the congress, the security police in hot pursuit. The protesters pleaded with NUSAS to intervene with the government which planned to close their school, the only Indian secondary institution in Johannesburg. After a fierce debate, all⁴⁰ members of the NUSAS assembly decided to join an illegal march with the children to the Department of Education. On their return to Wits they were stopped and dispersed by the police.⁴¹ Judging by the fact that the march was listed as 'controversial' and 'requiring clarification' in some delegations' report-backs to their student bodies,⁴² the march was evidently too much for many constitutionally minded white students. It was one thing to demonstrate against university apartheid and the Sabotage Bill, but quite another to make a public spectacle of oneself in the company of chanting, banner waving Indian school children.⁴³

Conservative campus reaction

Shortly after the conclusion of the 1963 congress, Driver visited various NUSAS campuses and discovered that certain students criticised the national union for being 'too political'.⁴⁴ The fallout had begun.

By late 1962, a conservative, Nationalist clique ('Dressing' to the campus wags) led by Christopher Lessing, chairperson of rag (who described himself as 'an officer and a gentleman'⁴⁵) and Melvyn Drummond (who had a picture of Mussolini on his bedroom wall)⁴⁶ had taken control of UCT's Day Students' Council and its official mouthpiece. This afforded

³⁷ D. Welsh, *The rise and fall of apartheid*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 2011, p. 119.

³⁸ *Dome*, August 1963; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 16, 2.8.1963.

³⁹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 16, 2.8.1963; *Nux*, 16.8.1963; *Rhodes* vol. 17 no. 4, 15.8.1963.

⁴⁰ As far as Gavin Williams was aware, everyone took part. Gavin Williams via email, 26.11.2014.

⁴¹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 16, 2.8.1963; *Nux*, 16.8.1963.

⁴² BC 586 O1.1, 'Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of the SRC, Rhodes University, held in the Council Chamber on Monday, the 29th of July, 1963 at 7:30 p.m.'

⁴³ *Nux*, 16.8.1963.

⁴⁴ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 16, 2.8.1963.

⁴⁵ Raymond Suttner via email, 2.12.2014.

⁴⁶ *Varsity* vol. 22 no. 2, 1.3.1964.

them a platform from which to express their pro-apartheid, anti-liberal, anti-PP, anti-NUSAS and anti-SRC propaganda.⁴⁷ 'Dressing' was at the forefront of successfully campaigning for a new electoral system⁴⁸ which it optimistically and erroneously believed would break the power of the left and depoliticise the SRC, forcing the latter to follow a practical policy.⁴⁹ On two occasions the clique was accused of attempting to create an all-white apartheid Day Students' Council by unsuccessfully effecting the removal of, on a technicality, firstly an Indian student⁵⁰ and then a radical white one.⁵¹ Following the 1963 NUSAS congress, Drummond launched a bitter denunciation of the 'degrees motion' and 'Pan-Africanism', alleging in the latter case that Africans were intellectually, administratively and technically inferior, thus vindicating colonialism and the white man's presence in Africa.⁵² The Day Students' Council and the right wing put up a slate of candidates for the 1963/4 SRC elections.⁵³ Although they were over-optimistic in their prediction that the student body would return a largely conservative SRC,⁵⁴ the right wing did substantially better than usual, prompting Ken Owen of the *Argus* to note the 'ominous' decline of the liberal spirit at UCT and the rise of a pragmatic conservatism which eschewed a statement of principles.⁵⁵

A similar situation pertained at Wits. The SRC immediately, though not unanimously, dissociated itself from the 'degrees motion'⁵⁶ but took no stand on the IUS decision. Anti-NUSAS communist bashing became the mission of Roux Wildenboer,⁵⁷ an Afrikaans-speaking scion of an old Wits family,⁵⁸ who was associated with the far-right wing of the ASB,⁵⁹ was a NP organiser and former Pretoria University student⁶⁰ and, somewhat later, a member of the *Broederbond*.⁶¹ Wildenboer became chairperson of the Wits *Afrikaanse Studenteklub*, progressively transforming it into an overtly political society.⁶² During the 1963 SRC elections, Wildenboer topped the polls, winning the highest number of votes in Wits's

⁴⁷ *Day Student*, 26.3.1963; 23.4.1963; 2.5.1963; *Trend*, 6.8.1963; Alan Greenblo to *Trend*, 6.9.1963; *Varsity* vol. 22 no. 10, 22.5.1963.

⁴⁸ *Varsity* vol. 22 no. 10, 22.5.1963.

⁴⁹ See *Day Student* 1962-1963 and particularly 23.4.1963 and 22.5.1963.

⁵⁰ *Day Student*, 4.6.1963.

⁵¹ *Varsity* vol. 22 no. 2, 11.3.1964.

⁵² M. Drummond, 'Pan-Africanism – the evidence of its aims' in *Trend* (date cut off).

⁵³ *Trend*, 20.8.1963.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Argus*, 29.8.1963.

⁵⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 18, 16.8.1963.

⁵⁷ *ibid.* no. 4, 15.3.1963; R. Wildenboer to *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 18, 16.8.1963; no. 21, 6.9.1963; no. 23, 20.9.1963.

⁵⁸ M. Hersman, 'The Wildenboers', *Arena* vol. 9 no. 28, July 2002.

⁵⁹ J.H.P. Serfontein, *Die verkrampte aanslag*, Human and Rousseau, Cape Town and Pretoria, 1970, pp. 37, 59.

⁶⁰ *Nux* no. 4, 1965.

⁶¹ F. Wilkins and H. Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaners: inside the Afrikaner Broederbond*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1980, A297.

⁶² *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 4, 15.3.1963; no. 7, 5.4.1963; 'DRC' to *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 7, 5.4.1963; BC 586 B1 1965, A. Murray, 'Report to the 41st Congress of the National Union of South African Students, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, July 1965', pp. 2-3.

history.⁶³ On a manifesto devoted to 'getting NUSAS out of Wits and Wits out of NUSAS', Wildenboer won the support of conservatives from both within and outside the NP as well as the apathetic floating vote.⁶⁴ Predictably, the 'unpatriotic' degrees and the 'communist IUS' motions were singled out for attention in addition to NUSAS's professed liberalism. Wildenboer also lamented the declining moral standards and unchristian atmosphere prevailing at Wits as well as Wits' poor facilities compared to those at the apartheid-supporting, subsidy-rich Pretoria University. Like the conservatives at UCT, Wildenboer believed that the forty eight percent who did not vote in the election were anti-liberal and would eventually join the anti-liberal crusade.⁶⁵ The left tried to downplay and rationalise this distinct move to the right.⁶⁶ John Daniel would later argue that Wildenboer and his unforgettable name scored high on the campus 'recognition scale' amongst students who usually took only a 'passing interest' in student politics. Moreover, many voters selected only two candidates, Wildenboer and Derek Bostock, the latter NUSAS's international relations vice-president, out of a concern for ideological balance on the SRC.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, *Wits Student* did recognise that Wildenboer's success represented a new and dangerous trend in Wits politics which could wipe out the last vestiges of academic freedom on the campus.⁶⁸

At nearby JCE, the PP-dominated SRC rejected the 'degrees' and IUS motions⁶⁹ as well as the political direction of NUSAS policy and continued its pursuit of white student co-operation with the ASB and its affiliates.⁷⁰ Rhodes followed a similar course, having made fruitful contact with Stellenbosch and Potchefstroom earlier in the year.⁷¹ Its new 'middle-of-the-road' SRC⁷² with a few fervently anti-NUSAS members ('hard nuts')⁷³ was determined that NUSAS would follow a conservative course in the future. A student body meeting voted to retain Rhodes's individual membership to NUSAS and not revert to automatic affiliation.⁷⁴ So strong was this feeling that an aspirant SRC candidate failed to be elected when she stood on a platform of automatic affiliation.⁷⁵ At Pietermaritzburg, tremendous apathy as well as latent hostility and ignorance of NUSAS existed. In May 1963, a disaffiliation movement

⁶³ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 20, 30.8.1963; vol. 16 no. 1, 21.2.1964.

⁶⁴ R.M. Wildenboer to *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 18, 16.8.1963.

⁶⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 23, 20.9.1963.

⁶⁶ *ibid.* no. 21, 6.9.1963.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1963, p. 4.

⁷⁰ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1964, pp. 30-31.

⁷¹ BC 586 O1.1, Mike Chapman to Jonty Driver, 21.6.1963; *Rhodeo* vol. 17 no. 7, 9.5.1963, no. 9, 23.5.1963.

⁷² *Rhodeo* vol. 17 no. 19, 17.9.1963.

⁷³ BC 586 O1.1, Mike Bands to Jonty Driver, 22.2.1964.

⁷⁴ *Rhodeo* vol. 17 no. 17, 5.9.1963.

⁷⁵ BC 586 O1.1, Renier Lock, 'Memorandum on the system of optional enrolment at Rhodes University 1962 - 1964', nd.

crystalised but ultimately the student body voted against abandoning its automatic membership of NUSAS.⁷⁶

The far-right, white co-operation and NUSAS

Exploiting these promising political developments on the NUSAS campuses was one of the reasons that motivated the state and its allies to launch a full scale offensive against NUSAS. This was orchestrated by the *Broederbond*, the ASB, the Minister of Justice, John Vorster, and the far-right wing, rabidly anti-communist 'Hertzog Group' which, as its name suggests, included amongst others, Albert Hertzog and his secret Pretoria-based study group, the *Afrikaner Orde*. The thinking of the Hertzog Group looked back to the radical right Afrikaner nationalism of the 1930s and 1940s, but also drew heavily on the ideas of the burgeoning American ultra-right. These ideas were disseminated by the *South African Observer* edited by S.E.D. Brown, a known anti-Semite and former South African Defence Force operative. The American ultra-right (like Hitler) drew its inspiration from the anti-Semitic nineteenth century forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This long discredited document warned of a global Jewish conspiracy to effect world domination through the vehicles of international capitalism and communism, the Freemasons, the suppressed Enlightenment '*Illuminati*' (advocates of secularism, free thought, liberalism and gender equality), and the Catholic Church.⁷⁷ For this plot to succeed, 'Western' 'Christian' society had to be fatally weakened. For the ultra-right then, secular 'Jewish', '*Illuminati*', 'Freemason-controlled', liberal supranational bodies like the United Nations were believed to champion a 'new world order' and a global communist government which threatened the continued existence of nations and Christianity.⁷⁸ Secularism and internationalism went hand in hand with social liberalisation. Social liberalisation eroded family values and thus sapped the moral fibre of Christian societies making them susceptible to atheist communist penetration and takeover. Thus the American ultra-right and its South African counterpart devoted much energy to sniffing out and decrying so-called communists, liberals, internationalist organisations, sexual permissiveness, nudity, obscenity, blasphemy, pornography and also, slightly later, feminism, homosexuality, abortion and birth control. In South Africa this took the form of policing the morals of white society including, as will be seen, those attending the English-medium universities.

The far-right rigorously upheld the censorship of books, magazines and films allowed for by the Publications and Entertainment Act of 1963 and would extend this vigilance to the

⁷⁶ 'Round One' to *Nux*, 14.6.1963; Robin Anderson 'Reply to Round One' to *Nux* no. 7, June 1963.

⁷⁷ See, for example, Umberto Eco, *The Prague cemetery*, Vintage, London, 2012, pp. 559-560, 564-565.

⁷⁸ P.W. Botha, the president of South Africa from 1984 to 1989 and though not associated with the 1960s Hertzog Group, accused his presidential successor, F.W. de Klerk of being a member of the New World Order. F.W. de Klerk, *The last trek - a new beginning*, Pan, London, 1999, pp. 273-274.

'Sestigers' too, a new generation of young *avant garde* Afrikaans writers like Jan Rabie, Etienne le Roux and André P. Brink. The *Sestigers*, who won a following amongst young Afrikaners, broke with the realist parochialism of Afrikaans literature and ventured into new literary forms and embraced new philosophical movements often after encountering these in extended trips abroad.⁷⁹

The emergence of the *Sestigers* and its supporters signified the dramatic social, economic and ideological changes occurring within Afrikanerdom. It was quite clear that the multiclass alliance of Afrikaner nationalism was slowly coming apart. The far-right looked askance as the new self-confident Afrikaner business class, which, realising that its material interests lay with those of English capital, sought increasingly to find an accommodation with '*Hoggenheimer*', Afrikaner nationalism's long-time enemy. With the attainment of the Republic, the numerically expanding, educated, urbanised and increasingly affluent middle class saw themselves as part of a wider environment than exclusive Afrikanerdom. This enlightened ('*verligte*') group became more open to new political and cultural ideas and embraced Verwoerd's stated policy of a white South African nationalism.⁸⁰

The far-right believed that these developments threatened the purity and existence of the Afrikaner nation and the ideological integrity of apartheid. Thus, in early 1963, the Hertzog Group launched its smear campaign against those within the Afrikaner Nationalist establishment believed to hold even vaguely liberal or dissident views.⁸¹ In addition, it created a large number of front organisations and infiltrated key Afrikaans cultural organisations such as the ASB.⁸² John Vorster was not a member of the Hertzog Group. However, he had close ties to it and being vehemently anti-communist and anti-liberal and an unstinting seurocrat (with a close relationship to his fellow *Ossewabrandwag* interneer, General Hendrik van den Berg, head of the Security Police), was the Hertzog Group's nomination for the premiership after the assassination of Verwoerd in 1966.⁸³ Three years later the Hertzog Group (by then part of a much larger ultra-conservative grouping and discussed more fully in chapter ten) broke with Vorster because of the prime minister's

⁷⁹ A.P. Brink, *A fork in the road: a memoir*, Vintage, London, 2010, pp. 207-210, 212.

⁸⁰ D. O' Meara, *Forty lost years: the apartheid state and the politics of the National Party, 1948-1994*, Ravan and Ohio University Press, Randburg and Athens, 1996, pp. 136-167. It was the opinion of Michel le Roux in 1971/2 that contemporary Afrikaans-speaking students had more in common with their English-speaking counterparts ('professional aspirations' and 'materialistic dreams') than with Afrikaans-speaking post office and railway workers. M. le Roux, 'The new Afrikaners: views on the ideals and policies of the moderate Afrikaans students', H. Van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds), *Student perspectives on South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1972, p. 88. See A. Grundlingh, "'Are we Afrikaners getting too rich?'" Cornucopia and change in Afrikanerdom in the 1960s', *Journal of Historical Sociology* vol. 21 no. 2/3, June/September 2008.

⁸¹ J.H.P. Serfontein, *Die verkrampde aanslag*, Human and Rousseau, Cape Town and Pretoria, 1970, pp. 7, 51-54.

⁸² *ibid.*, p. 37.

⁸³ D. O' Meara, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

pragmatic tinkering with apartheid and were subsequently expelled from the NP. The Hertzog Group would form the nucleus of the *Herstigte Nasionale Party*, a party committed to uncompromising *baasskap* apartheid and an Afrikaner state with Afrikaans as the only official language.⁸⁴

Piet Meyer, a leading member of the Hertzog Group until 1969 and head of both the *Broederbond* and the SABC, announced to the *Broederbond* in 1966 his belief that the Afrikanerisation and hence neutralisation of white English-speakers was crucial to the completion of the Afrikaner Nationalist project.⁸⁵ Thus publicly he expressed himself in favour of a more inclusive white nationalism, in the student sphere at least. The interpretation and content of his understanding of white inclusivity was thus somewhat at variance to that of the other NP white co-operationists whose conception of white South African nationalism was based more on the equality of the two white language groups rather than the assimilation or domination of one by the other. Meyer wished then to organise English-speakers into a separate English section of a federal ASB which would in turn be Afrikanerised and politically indoctrinated. In so doing, a number of goals would be achieved. The cultural and ideological purity of the ASB would be preserved as Afrikaans-speakers would remain separately organised. Also, the threat of anglicisation and liberalism would be eliminated and Afrikaner domination secured in the student sphere. And, finally, the NP co-operationists would be appeased as English-speakers would be part of one ASB. To achieve this, a sustained smear campaign from all fronts against NUSAS, the English universities and liberalism would be mounted. This would bleed NUSAS's membership. In addition, NUSAS would be structurally weakened by cutting it off from its student base. The *Broederbond* identified NUSAS's dependence on its automatic enrolment system for its numerical strength and its foreign funding for its financial strength. These weaknesses would be exploited by the establishment of new student organisations financed by the *Broederbond*.⁸⁶ The growing conservatism of English-speaking students in addition to divisions within the UP Youth (between the liberal left wing and the almost NP right wing)⁸⁷ would be exploited so as to establish campus conservative student organisations. These would be associated with the ASB and would eventually be transformed into the ASB's English Bond.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 163-164.

⁸⁵ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: biography of a people*, Tafelberg and the University of Virginia, Cape Town and Charlottesville, 2004, p. 550; J.H.P. Serfontein, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

⁸⁶ I. Wilkins and H. Strydom, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

⁸⁷ Its leadership in the Transvaal included Douglas Gibson and Dave Dalling both of whom would move into the PP. The future Marxist historian, Martin Legassick was a member of the Cape UP Youth and resigned from the organisation after being accused of displaying PP sympathies. M. Legassick, *Towards socialist democracy*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Scottsville, 2007, p. 1.

In May 1963, Piet Meyer announced to an ASB mass meeting at Pretoria University that the time was ripe for the establishment of an 'English Student League'.⁸⁸ At the ASB congress in July 1963, the more enlightened ASB president, Dirk Herbst proclaimed that NUSAS was not the natural home of patriotic English-speakers and for this reason the ASB would welcome them in its ranks.⁸⁹ These moves were not only aimed at harnessing anti-NUSAS feeling on the English-medium campuses to the NP cause, but also, particularly in Meyer's case, at breaking the incipient revolt at the Afrikaans-medium centres. Anti-ASB sentiment was running high even at Pretoria. In May 1963 an attempt was made there to abolish automatic membership of the ASB and create a new non-ideological, bilingual organisation for white students outside any of the existing student bodies.⁹⁰ Moreover, the ASB's idealistic 'Self-Help' campaign which entailed replacing black domestic workers in the university and college residences with self-service dining halls and student cleaners was by July 1964 an abysmal failure.⁹¹ It was quite clear then that a significant number of Afrikaans-speaking students had little sympathy for the impractical, inconvenient ideological schemes of the ASB which moreover would serve to entrench rather than end Afrikaans-speaking students' isolation from other groups within society.

Early in 1963, left wing students, staff members and organisations at the NUSAS universities were subjected to an anonymous smear campaign. This coincided with the onset of the Hertzog Group's anonymous 'smear letter' writing programme to *Dagbreek*, the Afrikaans Sunday newspaper edited by the enlightened Dirk Richard.⁹² Anonymous pamphlets libellously depicting the NUSAS leadership as communist were distributed at Wits and Durban⁹³ and both campuses suffered a spate of anti-Semitic attacks.⁹⁴ In addition, the Wits Human Rights Society's exhibition was extensively vandalised.⁹⁵ Alex Antonites of the Pretoria ASB and the Hertzog Group⁹⁶ (and later a philosophy lecturer at Zululand and Pretoria) found these 'troubles' at Wits 'gratifying' because they indicated a right wing challenge to liberal hegemony and prepared the way for an 'Afrikaans-orientated English Student Bond'.⁹⁷ The smear campaign took on a more sinister aspect by the end of 1963 when Denis Brutus, a banned and detained Wits SRC member and founder of SANROC

⁸⁸ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, p. 26.

⁸⁹ *Die Transvaler*, 11.7.1963 cited in *NUSAS Newsletter*, 31.3.1964, p. 5.

⁹⁰ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 11, 17.5.1963; no. 12, 24.5.1963; *Nux* no. 7, June 1963.

⁹¹ *Trompie* vol. 3 no. 4, 7.3.1963; J. Boshoff to *Trompie* vol. 3 no. 12, 14.6.1963; *Rhodeo* vol. 17 no. 11, 6.6.1963; *Cape Times*, 1.7.1964.

⁹² D. O' Meara, *op. cit.*, p. 120; J.H.P. Serfontein, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 51-52.

⁹³ BC 586 A2.1, Derek Bostock to Jonty Driver, 9.3.1963; Jonty Driver to Derek Bostock, 14.3.1963, B1 Presidential Report 1963, p. 111.

⁹⁴ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 6, 19.4.1963; no. 7, 26.4.1963, *Nux* no. 4, 1963; 3.4.1963; *NUSAS Newsletter*, 31.3.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 15, 24.6.1964.

⁹⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 11, 17.5.1963.

⁹⁶ J.H.P. Serfontein, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

⁹⁷ Alex Antonites to *Die Perdeby*, 5.4.1963 reproduced in BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1963, pp. 110-111.

was shot at close range while escaping from custody.⁹⁸ During 1964 and 1965, fifteen UCT students and staff members, as well as the NUSAS president, Osler, experienced *inter alia* threatening phone calls and letters, spray painted houses, office burglaries and their cars being dangerously tampered with.⁹⁹ In addition, the car of NUSAS executive member and Pietermaritzburg LP activist, deeply involved in the 1963 Transkei elections, John Aitcheson, was petrol bombed.¹⁰⁰ In separate incidents, two students narrowly escaped being deliberately run over and killed.¹⁰¹ Vigne believed that even during the 1960s an embryonic 'Third Force', like that of the late 1980s and 1990s, was in existence.¹⁰² This probably had much to do with the establishment of Hendrik van den Bergh's 'Republican Intelligence', the covert branch of the Security Police which was the predecessor of the frightening Bureau of State Security (BOSS). Not surprisingly then, the police made no headway in solving any of these cases.

John Vorster's attacks on NUSAS

The second half of 1963 marked a new phase in the state's security clampdown. The high command of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) was arrested at Rivonia in July 1963 and charged with high treason. The disproportionately large number of Wits graduates amongst these SACP and ANC MK cadres who moreover had been active in student and even NUSAS politics, was not lost on the state. Arrests and bannings continued. A large cohort of Fort Hare students, including NUSAS and/or ANC activists were detained in August 1963. (See chapter seven.) A number of ANC, TIYC¹⁰³ and LP members at UNNE, Wits and Pietermaritzburg were banned, including Mhlambiso¹⁰⁴ and Aitcheson.¹⁰⁵

John Vorster launched his first verbal attack on NUSAS at the NP *Jeugbond* Congress in Pretoria on 30 August 1963. The date is significant as campus SRC elections in which right wing candidates were contesting seats were reaching a climax. Moreover, this attack occurred shortly after the Rivonia and Fort Hare arrests and two weeks after the renewed and intensified national sabotage campaign of the National Committee of Liberation (NCL).¹⁰⁶ Vorster alleged that the 'recent [nationwide] unrest' was not a 'spontaneous

⁹⁸ Jonty Driver to Alan Murray, 6.11.1963.

⁹⁹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, p. 22; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 15, 24.6.1964; 9.9.1964.

¹⁰⁰ *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 10, 19.5.1965; *Nux*, 22.6.1965; R. Vigne, *Liberals against apartheid: a history of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 1953-68*, MacMillan and St Martins, Houndsmill and New York, 1997, p. 198.

¹⁰¹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, p. 22; *Varsity*, 9.9.1964.

¹⁰² R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

¹⁰³ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 3, 6.3.1964.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.* no. 6, 3.4.1964.

¹⁰⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, p. 36; *Nux* no. 5, 1.6.1965; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 13, 4.6.1965.

¹⁰⁶ M. Gunther, 'The National Committee of Liberation (NCL)/ African Resistance Movement (ARM), South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 1, 1960-1970*, Zebra Press,

outburst' but the work of certain white agitators. Specifically, the more sophisticated technology used by the NCL suggested to the state that a new organisation had been born¹⁰⁷ and in view of Vorster's racist reasoning, it could be construed that he would guess it had significant white involvement. Evidently then, in an attempt to link NUSAS in the public mind to subversion, sabotage and the recent arrests, Vorster cryptically threatened NUSAS with possible action against it 'in the light of certain developments which will probably be discussed in the course of this year.' Claiming that 'liberalist and progressive ideas had taken root' at the English universities which were attributable to NUSAS, Vorster appealed to the UP-supporting parents of students at the English universities to investigate NUSAS and its influence on their children.¹⁰⁸ He presumably hoped that parents would then take action against the national union and that UP-supporting students would be frightened into voting the conservative anti-NUSAS candidates onto their SRCs.

The Durban and Wits SRC responded in terms of defending the liberal freedoms of the university which encouraged students to think for themselves and not follow blindly the beliefs of their parents.¹⁰⁹ The NUSAS vice-president, Parker, responded far more aggressively by reminding Vorster that cabinet ministers had been known to lie to and about NUSAS. He challenged Vorster to reveal his 'developments', substantiate his attacks, and desist from further innuendoes and smears that NUSAS was involved in illegal activities.¹¹⁰ Taking advantage of the Rivonia raids, Albert Hertzog smeared the English universities the following day, accusing them of harbouring saboteurs and being hotbeds of subversion.¹¹¹

There were almost immediate reactions to these events on NUSAS campuses. Heralding the serious future problems for NUSAS at Durban, two members of the Durban NUSAS Local Committee moved, unsuccessfully, a motion of censure of Parker for his rude, 'obnoxious' and disrespectful reply to Vorster. The movers believed that student unions should be on harmonious terms with the government.¹¹² At UCT, Lessing launched an attack on NUSAS in the Day Students' Council's newspaper, *Trend*, and recommended that UCT abolish its automatic membership to NUSAS.¹¹³ These sentiments were echoed on the UCT SRC a few days later when Lessing and Gerrit van Schalkwyk (UP)¹¹⁴ moved that UCT replace its

Cape Town, 2004, p. 235; A. du Toit, 'The National Committee for Liberation ("ARM"), 1960-1964: sabotage and the question of the ideological subject', MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1990, pp. 108-109.

¹⁰⁷ M. Brokensha and R. Knowles, *The fourth of July raids*, Simondium, Cape Town, 1965, p. 54.

¹⁰⁸ *Argus*, 31.8.1963.

¹⁰⁹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 21, 6.9.1963; *Varsity* vol. 22 no. 21, 15.9.1963.

¹¹⁰ *Dome*, October 1963.

¹¹¹ *Cape Times*, 4.9.1963; *Nux* no. 11, 30.10.1963.

¹¹² *Dome*, October 1963.

¹¹³ C. Lessing, 'Price of Freedom – Eternal Vigilance', *Trend*, nd.; *Varsity* vol. 22 no. 22, 11.9.1963.

¹¹⁴ Like the UP, he rejected the Bantu Law Amendment Bill while his subsequent activities, which will be discussed later, suggested that he was a committed UP supporter. *Varsity* vol. 22 no. 10, 22.5.1963.

automatic membership to NUSAS with individual enrolment because of 'the dissatisfaction of some students with certain NUSAS policies'. This was defeated by ten votes to five¹¹⁵ following which Van Schalkwyk and Lessing attempted to convene a student mass meeting to discuss the issue, but failed to collect the requisite number of signatures to do so.¹¹⁶ Subsequently, ten leading UCT students, led by Van Schalkwyk, resigned from NUSAS stating that because of its 'open standpoint', NUSAS had become the mouthpiece of 'political organisations which present no practical or peaceful means of obtaining a change of government in South Africa'.¹¹⁷ Presumably because the right wing accused NUSAS of being 'too political', the NUSAS president found it noteworthy that the dissidents accepted that a national union had an overtly political function.¹¹⁸ Evidently NUSAS was not too political, it just pursued the wrong politics.

On 14 September 1963, in the middle of the UCT events, Vorster made his second attack on NUSAS. For Vorster, 'the big cancer' in South African public life was 'whites who agitated amongst blacks'.¹¹⁹ Evidently NUSAS was just such an agitator body, as Vorster claimed that NUSAS was 'a cancer in the life of South Africa which must be cut out' and that it was 'a mouthpiece of liberalism and tinged with communism'. He went further by stating that 'I cannot say that every member of NUSAS is a communist, but I can say that every communist at the universities is a member of NUSAS. I will reckon with NUSAS in my own good time'.¹²⁰ NUSAS believed, and issued a statement to this effect, that Vorster's latest verbal assault was an 'attempt to try and prevent the anti-NUSAS move at the University of Cape Town from completely fizzling out'.¹²¹ The SABC entered the fray too, airing a talk by Ivor Benson (associated with Piet Meyer and the Hertzog Group and its future 'Volkskongres' and the Council against Communism)¹²² lauding the resignations at UCT as an 'assertion of a genuine South African spirit' which stemmed from a 'spontaneous revolt' against the deliberate efforts of a small group of 'fanatical leftists and liberals' as well as 'communist and leftist lecturers' to transform NUSAS into a political organisation hostile to 'our national cause'.¹²³ Marais Steyn, the Transvaal UP leader came to NUSAS's defence.¹²⁴ There were good liberal reasons for defending a legal organisation against government assault and though Steyn was a conservative, he was also a fiery anti-Nationalist. Perhaps

¹¹⁵ BC 586 O1.1, UCT SRC Minutes, 11.9.1963; *Cape Times*, 12.9.1963.

¹¹⁶ *Varsity* vol. 22 no. 23, 18.9.1963; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 23, 20.9.1963.

¹¹⁷ *Argus*, 17.9.1963; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 23, 20.9.1963.

¹¹⁸ BC 586 B4.1, Jonty Driver to the Executive, 9.10.1963.

¹¹⁹ J. de Oliveira, *Vorster the man*, Ernest Stanton, Johannesburg, 1977, p. 128.

¹²⁰ B4.1, Jonty Driver to the Executive, 9.10.1963, p. 8; *Varsity* vol. 22 no. 23, 18.9.1963.

¹²¹ *Varsity* vol. 22 no. 23, 18.9.1963.

¹²² J.H.P. Serfontein, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

¹²³ *Cape Times*, 19.9.1963; *Dome*, October 1963; *Nux* no. 11, 30.11.1963.

¹²⁴ BC 586 B4.1, Jonty Driver to the Executive, 9.10.1963, p. 8.

because of this intervention, Van Schalkwyk and four other members of the anti-NUSAS campaign did an about turn and withdrew their resignations from NUSAS. They explained this by saying they were not the government lackeys they were made out to be and while they still objected to some aspects of NUSAS policy, they would work within the organisation to change it.¹²⁵ Altogether, sixteen 'resignees' returned to NUSAS, a great victory for the national union.¹²⁶

In a surprise move, the SABC acceded to NUSAS's request to reply to Benson. This brief response stressed the democratic nature of the organisation and avoided a positive statement of beliefs.¹²⁷ Immediately thereafter, a new attack by Vorster was aired. Vorster called on students who were 'compulsory members' of NUSAS to resign 'for the sake of our country'.¹²⁸ He took it as given that NUSAS was 'communist', listing as NUSAS activists some prominent communists who had never played a leading role in the national union. In addition, he labelled the international organisations with which NUSAS was associated even tangentially, such as the Algerian Union of Students and the IUS, as 'communist', 'revolutionary' or 'anti-South African'. The 'degree motion' and NUSAS's alleged collaboration with SANROC in having South Africa ousted from the Olympic games, were denounced as 'anti-South African'. Further, NUSAS was condemned for its endorsement of Pan-Africanism, 'biological integration' and a universal franchise, the latter a policy only of the SACP and LP¹²⁹ - evidently a smear attempt to link the LP and NUSAS to the SACP.

During much of this time, Driver was overseas and was not in a position to co-ordinate the response to Vorster. Thus SRC presidents, some of whom were PP-aligned, interpreted NUSAS policy according to their own individual or SRC beliefs. Durban and Rhodes, for example, portrayed NUSAS in a conservative 'students-as-such' light.¹³⁰ In denying that NUSAS was communist, some SRCs claimed that NUSAS was anti-communist, falling directly into Vorster's trap, in the opinion of the scathing Trotskyite left and the aggrieved UNNE SRC. UNNE also took exception to the absolute disowning of SANROC and its officers, Denis Brutus and John Harris, when NUSAS had policy on both non-racial sport (though not the sports boycott) and the banning order imposed on Brutus.¹³¹ UNNE also objected to Driver's '16 point' rebuttal of Vorster's allegations as being 'defensive' rather than

¹²⁵ Maeder Osler, 'Vice-President Elect's statement in reply to Mr Benson', nd., BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 84; *Cape Times*, 20.9.1963.

¹²⁶ Mel Pichanick to *Varsity* vol. 22 no. 23, 18.9.1963.

¹²⁷ *Dome Special NUSAS Edition*, October 1963.

¹²⁸ *Nux* no. 10, 30.10.1963.

¹²⁹ *Cape Times*, 30.9.1963.

¹³⁰ BC 586 B4.1, Jonty Driver to Bala (Mudaly), 4.10.1963; *Nux*, 30.10.1963; *Rhodeo* vol. 17 no. 17, 5.9.1963;

Dome Special NUSAS Edition, October 1963.

¹³¹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 19, 7.9.1962.

a principled statement of NUSAS beliefs. Although technically NUSAS had radical policy on all aspects of South African life based on its acceptance of the Declaration of Universal Human Rights, Driver denied that NUSAS had taken a stand on either the franchise or biological integration. Justifying this to UNNE, Driver explained that he was appealing to ordinary students not familiar with NUSAS policy, not to heed the directive of Vorster and resign from NUSAS. This required a factual and diplomatic approach, he believed.¹³²

Some weeks later, Vorster publicly associated NUSAS with the ANC and subversion by referring to NUSAS members as 'Luthuli's boys' and casting aspersions on the newly inaugurated 'Political Freedom Fund'.¹³³ Vorster also publicly questioned the nature of talks Driver had conducted with representatives of the banned liberation movements in London. Though such meetings had taken place, these were more in the nature of rekindling old UCT friendships. A conversation with the ANC's London representative, Mazizi Kunene, was largely restricted to poetry, though a worried Driver did overhear the PAC's Nana Mahoma's negotiations for the supply of machine guns. Thus, with the permission of the executive, Driver claimed no knowledge of such meetings, reasoning that for Vorster to pursue this dangerous to NUSAS line of questioning, he would face the embarrassment of having to admit that South Africans were placed under surveillance while travelling abroad.¹³⁴ On 17 October 1963, the police raided NUSAS's offices, confiscating documents relating to the IUS, communism and the campaign against the General Law Amendment Act.¹³⁵ In NUSAS's opinion, Vorster had failed to break NUSAS with his smear campaign and had thus resorted to uncovering 'damaging' information to use against the national union.¹³⁶

Much was made by Driver and the sympathetic English press of the McCarthyist methods employed by Vorster and the far-right wing to smear NUSAS. Vorster, like McCarthy, equated liberalism with communism and levelled unfounded allegations of 'communism', 'left taint' and 'fellow travelling' at various groups in society, including university staff and students. These smears, it was hoped, would, as they had done in the USA, whip the public into an anti-communist frenzy¹³⁷ allowing Vorster to do as he pleased with his adversaries, the English-medium universities and their institutions.

¹³² BC 586 B4.1, Jonty Driver to Bala (Mudaly), 14.10.1963.

¹³³ *NUSAS Newsletter*, 23.3.1964, p. 26.

¹³⁴ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', Unpublished memoir, pp. 8, 11.

¹³⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 25; *NUSAS Newsletter*, 23.3.1964, p. 25.

¹³⁶ *NUSAS Newsletter*, 23.3.1964, p. 25.

¹³⁷ *Cape Times*, 17.3.1963; *Star*, 30.9.1963; *Dome Special NUSAS Edition*, October 1963.

Though Driver predicted NUSAS would 'suffer' from Vorster's 'multiple untruths' and could even face proscription¹³⁸ of itself and its president (a deliberate ploy employed by the NUSAS president to goad even conservative students to the defence of NUSAS and its president),¹³⁹ the Minister of Justice succeeded only in denting NUSAS but not breaking it. At Wits, more than three hundred students resigned from NUSAS following a concerted pamphleteering campaign by Wildenboer. At UCT there were over two hundred resignations, at Durban, thirty, and at Rhodes, where individual enrolment was followed, only three.¹⁴⁰ At Pietermaritzburg, one hundred and fifty students repeated the earlier call for voluntary NUSAS membership in addition to the same number allegedly writing to Vorster supporting his standpoint on NUSAS.¹⁴¹ Students at Cape Town Teachers' Training College abolished automatic membership¹⁴² and the Baptist Theological College and the Grahamstown Training College submitted their notices of disaffiliation.¹⁴³ In early 1964, the Department of Education, Arts and Science forbade students at any institution falling under its jurisdiction, including those at the Johannesburg Arts and Crafts College and pre-primary training colleges, from associating with NUSAS.¹⁴⁴

The ASB executive took advantage of this situation. In October 1963, it commissioned an investigation into the possibility of establishing an organisation for students who had resigned from NUSAS which would eventually operate on a confederal basis with the ASB.¹⁴⁵ At the same time, the NP *Jeugbond* announced that it would appoint a full-time organiser at UCT¹⁴⁶ and an unsuccessful attempt was made to start a branch of the NP at Durban.¹⁴⁷ During late November and early December, unsubstantiated reports reached NUSAS that moves were afoot in Johannesburg and Cape Town to establish some new organisation.¹⁴⁸

Despite these new developments and the damaging nature of the Vorster attacks, NUSAS did not dilute its radical policy in late 1963 or in the new academic year when it delivered its traditional speech to new students on its affiliated campuses. Apart from departing from its principles, a tactical move to the right would result in NUSAS losing its black and radical

¹³⁸ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, 'Tail-end of the Attacks', p. 26.

¹³⁹ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', Unpublished memoir, p. 11.

¹⁴⁰ *Dome Special NUSAS Edition*, October 1963; *Nux*, 30.10.1963; *Rhodeo* vol. 27 no. 21, 10.10.1963; *NUSAS Newsletter*, 23.3.1964, p. 25.

¹⁴¹ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1963, p. 5.

¹⁴² BC 586 B1 1964, Frances Archer, 'Report of the Cape Town Training College Local Committee', p. 1.

¹⁴³ BC 586 B4.1, Jonty Driver to the Executive, 9.10.1963.

¹⁴⁴ *Witwatersrand Student*, 7.6.1964.

¹⁴⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 55.

¹⁴⁶ BC 586 O5.1, UCT SRC Minutes, 11.3.1964; *NUSAS Newsletter*, 31.3.1964, p. 31.

¹⁴⁷ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1963, p. 6.

¹⁴⁸ BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents, 2.3.1964, p. 1.

membership. Moreover, international events necessitated NUSAS taking an even stronger left stand than previously. Its continued accreditation in international student forums like the ISC was potentially in jeopardy while in January 1964, the NUSAS representative had walked out of the Pan African Student Seminar in Dar es Salaam in protest at NUSAS being labelled unrepresentative and thus ineligible to participate in any regional or international forum. (This will be discussed in detail in chapter nine.) The Vorster attacks did however put a temporary brake on NUSAS's rapprochement with the IUS. Driver's mandated meeting in Europe with the IUS had not gone entirely according to plan, and in the light of the dangerous domestic situation in which NUSAS found itself, its outcome could be slanted positively or negatively.¹⁴⁹ Ultimately, the executive voted four in favour and four against NUSAS attending the 8th IUS Congress in an observer capacity.¹⁵⁰

The *Volkskongres* on communism

Opposition to communism was becoming an even greater issue in South Africa. In order to 'champion' the 'hottest' issue that united Nationalists,¹⁵¹ the Hertzog group began making preparations in November 1963 for its controversial 'Volkskongres on the combatting of Communism: Christianity against Communism' scheduled for March-April 1964 in Pretoria.¹⁵² Heavily influenced by ultra-right wing American fundamentalist Christians, *Volkskongres* speakers concentrated on, among others, 'communist lies', 'communist brainwashing', the communist 'enslavement' of the free nations of the world, and importantly, the 'communist onslaught' against the Afrikaans churches which would 'render them defenceless against "liberal" and "communist" indoctrination'. In addition to the churches, it was alleged that youth and educational institutions were in danger of being transformed into 'tools for the communist revolutionary programme'.¹⁵³

For NUSAS this was an additional problem to be faced in the event of 'startling revelations' about 'communistic and liberalistic organisations' like NUSAS being made.¹⁵⁴ Driver wrote at some length on the need to avoid making any statement which would project the national union as 'anti-communist'. NUSAS was, he argued, 'anti-totalitarian' which necessarily implied opposition to communism. Moreover, an anti-communist policy would require

¹⁴⁹ BC 586 A2.1, Jonty Driver to Alan Murray, 6.11.1963.

¹⁵⁰ BC 586 B1, C.J. Driver, 'Statement by the NUSAS President to the UP on the rights of NUSAS officers, in particular the president to make statements in their personal capacities', nd., Addendum to Presidential Report 1964, pp. 153-155.

¹⁵¹ D. O' Meara, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

¹⁵² J.H.P. Serfontein, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

¹⁵³ W. Visser, 'Afrikaner anti-communist history production in South African historiography', H.E. Stollen (ed), *History making and present day politics, the meaning of collective memory in South Africa*, Nordiska Afrikaintitutet, Uppsala, 2006, pp. 302-333, <http://khanya.wordpress.com/2010/01/4> accessed 17.3.2013.

¹⁵⁴ BC 586 O1.1, Jonty Driver to Mike Bands, 1.4.1964, p. 1.

potential NUSAS members to declare their political affiliation which was incompatible with NUSAS's open membership clause. Thus NUSAS was to remain 'non-communist' and 'anti-totalitarian' and when attacked would embarrass the government by describing both Stalinist communism and apartheid South Africa as 'totalitarian'.¹⁵⁵ The *Volkskongres* was described by the press as 'religious McCarthyism'. In Driver's research into methods used in combatting McCarthyism in the USA, he discovered the importance of moderates rather than radicals speaking up in the face of communist smear campaigns. He thus urged the moderate to conservative Rhodes SRC which already had an anti-communist policy in place, to pass a resolution on the dangers of McCarthyism to the universities, to students and to anyone opposing apartheid.¹⁵⁶ It is not clear whether the SRC responded. After the *Volkskongres* accused the Students' Christian Association of incipient communism¹⁵⁷ and condemned its (superficially) multi-racial membership as 'liable to encourage ideologies hostile to the church',¹⁵⁸ NUSAS again requested the moderate, religiously-inclined Rhodes SRC to respond to this.¹⁵⁹ Ultimately the radical UCT SRC obliged¹⁶⁰ but as a tactic against McCarthyism, it was probably as effective as if the allegedly 'communistic' NUSAS had responded itself.

Both UCT and Wits were under attack for promoting 'moral decay', the breeding ground of communism. In the wake of both the *Volkskongres* and the Easter sermon of John Vorster's brother, the Reverend Koot Vorster – a sermon devoted largely to the evils of UCT's rag - 'alien' and 'immoral' university rags came under sustained fire from the far-right wing NP press.¹⁶¹ It was alleged, *inter alia*, that scantily clad women at Wits and UCT and men attired in women's underwear were pornographic and alluring and led to black immorality.¹⁶² More seriously, both the president of the UCT SRC, Joseph Levenstein, and the editor of *Varsity*, Morris Szeftel (later a renowned Marxist political economist), were charged with obscenity by John Vorster following the publication of an article in the student press entitled 'How to seduce a freshette'.¹⁶³ These attacks on the liberal universities, the NUSAS-affiliated SRCs argued, were some of the weapons used by the far-right and the *Broederbond* in their campaign to portray Wits and UCT as morally decayed and thus unAfrikaans, thus softening

¹⁵⁵ BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents, 2.3.1964, p. 3.

¹⁵⁶ BC 586 O1.1, Jonty Driver to Mike Bands, 1.4.1964, p. 2; Mike Bands to Jonty Driver, 8.4.1964.

¹⁵⁷ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 6, 15.4.1964; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 8, 17.4.1964.

¹⁵⁸ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 7, 22.4.1964.

¹⁵⁹ BC 586 O1.1, Jonty Driver to Mike Bands, 3.4.1964.

¹⁶⁰ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 7, 22.4.1964.

¹⁶¹ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 5, 9.4.1964.

¹⁶² *Nux* no. 8, 13.8.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 5, 9.4.1964; no. 9, 13.5.1964; no. 10, 20.5.1964; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 26 no. 11, 15.5.1964; no. 12, 22.5.1964; no. 13, 1.6.1964; no. 21, 11.11.1964; *Nux* no. 8, 13.8.1964.

¹⁶³ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 5, 9.4.1964; *Nux* no. 8, 13.8.1964.

up the public for the erection of a new Afrikaans university on the Rand for which they were fighting.¹⁶⁴

The *Volkskongres* introduced a whole new genre of anti-communist, far-right wing and conservative thought and literature to South Africa. These included Scean Skousen's 1958 bestseller, *The Naked Communist* (Skousen was a Jehovah's Witness and former US FBI agent), which exposed both the goals of communism and the methods required to combat these, the former being read into the US Congressional Record in 1963.¹⁶⁵ *The Naked Communist* was quoted extensively by Wildenboer in justification for his attacks on rag and student life at Wits.¹⁶⁶ *Conscience of a Conservative* written in 1960 by Barry Goldwater, a hawkish, anti-communist, anti-integrationist and McCarthy defender and 1964 US presidential hopeful,¹⁶⁷ was distributed in Afrikaans as *Gewete van 'n konserwatis* by a Hertzog front, 'Sunergia Press'.¹⁶⁸ Goldwater's ideas were to come up quite frequently in the course of the development of the new conservative, anti-communist student societies in 1964.¹⁶⁹ These, NUSAS believed, formed part and parcel of the *Volkskongres* and 'the whole McCarthyist move the government is attempting to engineer'¹⁷⁰ which would consolidate NP support, eliminate political dissidents within and without the NP fold and muzzle the opposition press.¹⁷¹

The South African Conservative Students' Association (SACSA) at Wits

The next step in the state's campaign to break NUSAS by driving a wedge between the radical NUSAS leadership and its conservative student membership occurred in late December 1963 when unverified reports reached NUSAS that moves were afoot to establish some sort of national conservative student organisation. At a meeting in January 1964, attended by among others Wildenboer and right wing UP Youth leaders, John Mendelsohn and Winston Hertenberg, the South African Conservative Students' Association (SACSA) came into being. The executive was composed of supporters of both the NP and UP¹⁷² and chaired by Anton Mostert, a successful, extremely intelligent lawyer in his early thirties who

¹⁶⁴ *Nux* no. 3, March 1965; *Trend*, 17.5.1966.

¹⁶⁵ W. Cleon Skousen, *The naked communist*, C & J Investments, np., 2007, ebook, <http://tekiah.co.za/e-books/the-naked-communist-w-cleon-skousen.pdf> accessed 4.12.2014.

¹⁶⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 11, 15.5.1964; 'M.R. Grundy' to *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 13, 1.6.1964.

¹⁶⁷ Adam Clymer, 'Barry Goldwater, Conservative and Individualist, Dies at 89', *New York Times on the Web*, 29 May 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/01/04/01/specials/goldwater-obit.html> accessed 11.7.2013.

¹⁶⁸ J.H.P. Serfontein, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

¹⁶⁹ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 17, 12.8.1964.

¹⁷⁰ BC586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents, 2.3.1964.

¹⁷¹ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 5, 9.4.1964.

¹⁷² BC 586 S9, 'The advent of SACSA - the dilemma of the United Party student', *Audax*, Journal of the Witwatersrand Young Progressives.

was described either as a part-time Wits lecturer or Arts student. NUSAS suspected that he was connected to the NP but could find no proof of this or his membership (then or later) of the *Broederbond*.¹⁷³ Mostert came from a *bloedsap* family, was intensely patriotic, was some years later to oppose censorship and in 1978 defied PW Botha and exposed the Information Scandal.¹⁷⁴

Much to NUSAS's relief, SACSA tactically blundered right from the beginning.¹⁷⁵ Despite chairing the SRC's constitution committee, Wildenboer failed to submit the SACSA constitution for SRC ratification, thus forfeiting SACSA's right to operate as a registered campus society during student registration and so embark on its recruitment campaign. Mostert demanded that the Wits authorities over-ride SRC standing rules on SACSA's behalf, but the irate Wits principal, I.D. MacCrone, incensed at the arrogance and rudeness of Mostert, declined. After being threatened with disciplinary action when they continued putting up their posters, SACSA officers set up a table outside the university gates and through a loudhailer exhorted new and returning students to resign from NUSAS and complained of university and SRC discrimination.¹⁷⁶

Through its pamphlets, press releases and interviews, SACSA encouraged all conservative and 'patriotic' students, particularly those of NP and UP persuasion, to join SACSA and fight the forces of 'liberalism', 'leftism' and specifically, the unpatriotic and treasonous NUSAS. NUSAS was accused of trying to downgrade South African university qualifications and through its advancement of Pan-Africanism was guilty of the greatest treachery ever towards South Africa. Moreover, it allegedly included in its ranks the Rivonia trialists.¹⁷⁷ SACSA believed that ninety percent of Wits students were conservative and if they could be roused from their apathy and lethargy to join the 'national struggle', could ensure that NUSAS and its ideology would be obliterated from the Wits campus.¹⁷⁸

Using technical legal language which neither the very worried Wits SRC nor the NUSAS president could understand, Mostert informed the Wits SRC that its automatic affiliation to

¹⁷³ BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents, 4.3.1964, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ C. Rickard, *Thank you Judge Mostert*, Penguin, Rosebank, 2010, pp. 5, 6, 9, 13, 32, 33.

¹⁷⁵ BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents, 4.3.1964, pp. 5-6.

¹⁷⁶ BC 586 S9, 'Phone conversation with Derek Bostock, 17th February'; *Sunday Times*, 16.2.1964; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 1, 21.2.1964; no. 2, 27.2.1964; no. 4, 13.3.1964.

¹⁷⁷ BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents, 2.3.1964, Appendix 13, 'Pamphlet issued by SACSA on Wits campus' nd.; Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents and the Executive, 13.3.1964, pp. 8-10, Appendix 3,13; *Die Vaderland*, 19.2.1964; 25.2.1964.

¹⁷⁸ *Sunday Times*, 16.2.1964.

NUSAS was '*ultra vires*'.¹⁷⁹ The SRC publicly announced its intention to oppose Mostert's threatened legal action in court,¹⁸⁰ but after taking legal advice, had privately, without informing the student body, decided to change its method of affiliation. Driver did not approve of this change.¹⁸¹ He, along with the previous executive had been thinking about converting NUSAS membership to individual enrolment so as to create a more activist union, but he believed to do this after the Vorster attacks would be tantamount to caving in to government pressure.

Despite SACSA's success (probably unknown to it) with Wits's NUSAS affiliation, SACSA suffered a new setback. After SACSA's prohibition on the Wits campus and its subsequent defiance of the Wits authorities, the divided UP Youth began to have second thoughts about its involvement in an anti-establishment, perceived to be illegal organisation and its alliance in it with the NP. Marais Steyn left the critical Bantu Law Amendment debate in Cape Town and rushed up to Johannesburg to intervene in the dissension.¹⁸² He issued a statement to the press denying that his party had ever been associated with SACSA which he alleged was *Broederbond*-inspired and dominated.¹⁸³ UP members who remained in SACSA were secretly threatened with expulsion from the party.¹⁸⁴ This was a great blow to Mostert and Piet Coetzer of SACSA. They denied the *Broederbond* allegations and accused Steyn of betraying the conservative cause in general and those English-speakers in particular who regarded the UP as their natural political home. Presumably SACSA realised that they had lost the majority of their potential supporters as most conservatives at Wits were UP-inclined rather than Nationalist. Even more galling perhaps, was the warning by Douglas Gibson and Dave Dalling of the left wing of the UP Youth that membership of SACSA was incompatible with the ideal of academic freedom and Wits's traditional openness. In addition, they stated that if anyone 'sincerely' felt that 'NUSAS was in need of reform, there were democratic and constitutional mechanisms available for so doing'.¹⁸⁵ NUSAS was heartened that it still retained the support of a body as conservative as the UP Youth.

Despite the UP setback, SACSA submitted its constitution to the SRC for approval, but this was rejected by everyone except Wildenboer. It abrogated the Wits SRC's open

¹⁷⁹ BC 586 A2.1, Alan Murray to Jonty Driver, 2.3.1964; S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents, 2.3.1964, Appendix E; Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents and the Executive, Appendix 7, p. 13; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 26 no.10, 8.5.1964.

¹⁸⁰ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 26 no. 10, 8.5.1964.

¹⁸¹ BC 586 A2.1, Alan Murray to Jonty Driver, 13.4.1964; Jonty Driver to Alan Murray, 21.4.1964.

¹⁸² BC 586 S9, 'The advent of SACSA - the dilemma of the United Party student', *Audax*, Journal of the Witwatersrand Young Progressives.

¹⁸³ *Sunday Times*, 23.2.1964.

¹⁸⁴ BC 586 S9, 'The advent of SACSA - the dilemma of the United Party student', *Audax*, Journal of the Witwatersrand Young Progressives.

¹⁸⁵ *Sunday Times*, 23.2.1964.

membership code as membership of SACSA was made conditional on resigning from NUSAS. SACSA's aim was to 'offer relentless opposition to the cause of Communism and Leftism....and to maintain the present constitutional form of government in South Africa.' It's 'interpretation clause' which defined 'Leftism' as meaning adherence to 'one-man-one-vote' [sic], 'communism', 'Pan-Africanism' and 'liberation struggles' was severely criticised.¹⁸⁶ Some members of the SRC were unhappy that SACSA could not be recognised¹⁸⁷ presumably because the decision created the impression that SACSA was being victimised, something that NUSAS wished to avoid¹⁸⁸ because it played directly into the hands of the right. It was also feared that Mostert could still 'play his cards dangerously'¹⁸⁹ and use other methods to get at NUSAS. SACSA appealed to the university authorities to overturn the SRC's decision, to no avail.¹⁹⁰ Ultimately the leadership of SACSA fissured. Piet Coetzer (third in command) resigned, citing Wildenboer's disloyalty to Wits following his attack on rag (mentioned earlier) and the overtly political orientation of SACSA.¹⁹¹ Coetzer was said to be reconsidering his NUSAS membership as 'it ha[d] yet to be proved that NUSAS [was] not loyal to South Africa'.¹⁹²

Altogether twenty students resigned from NUSAS due to SACSA's efforts, bringing the total number of non-NUSAS members at Wits to two hundred in 1964,¹⁹³ a third less than at the end of 1963. SACSA was also thwarted in its goal of becoming a national students' union. NUSAS wished to avoid the emergence of a new national organisation at all costs and so leaked confidential information to the press to sabotage this (discussed later). NUSAS developed its approach to the SACSA threat by seeking the advice of Albert Geysler, professor of Divinity at Wits, whose expulsion and firing from the *Nederduits Hervormde* Church and Pretoria University on trumped up charges of heresy offered first-hand experience of NP aims and methods.¹⁹⁴ NUSAS recognised that for a change it was 'the establishment' and was thus in a position of strength *viz-a-viz* the 'anti-establishment' SACSA.¹⁹⁵ The Wits SRC was left to handle SACSA while NUSAS remained absolutely silent because, it was argued, issuing statements would have built up SACSA's public

¹⁸⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 4, 13.3.1964.

¹⁸⁷ BC 586 A2.2, na. (?) Maeder Osler, 'Memo to Jonty on V.P's Executive Visit to the Transvaal Region', nd., p.

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¹⁸⁸ BC 586 A2.1, Jonty Driver to Alan Murray, 2.3.1964.

¹⁸⁹ BC 586 A2.2, na. (?) Maeder Osler, 'Memo to Jonty on V.P's Executive Visit to the Transvaal Region', nd., p.

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¹⁹⁰ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 13, 1.6.1964.

¹⁹¹ *ibid.* no. 11, 15.5.1964; no. 12, 22.5.1964; no. 13, 1.6.1964.

¹⁹² *ibid.* no. 13, 1.6.1964.

¹⁹³ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 8.

¹⁹⁴ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 21, 11.9.1964; A2.2, na. (?) Maeder Osler, 'Memo to Jonty on V.P's Exec. Visit to the Transvaal Region', nd.

¹⁹⁵ BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents, 2.3.1964.

image. Nonetheless, some students at Wits did criticise NUSAS's silence, interpreting it as a sign of fear.¹⁹⁶

The Conservative Students' Association (CSA) at UCT

Shortly after the launch of SACSA at Wits, a conservative student body made its appearance at UCT. It is difficult to gauge the origins and linkages of this new group because its founders constantly contradicted themselves and concealed information about its association to the Wits SACSA, the NP, the *Broederbond* and the source of its seemingly unlimited funds.¹⁹⁷ The NUSAS-supporting UCT press exploited this to the utmost as it realised that the conservative revolt of the previous year had been defeated because of student distrust of the motives and allegiances of its leaders.¹⁹⁸ Thus the new body was portrayed as ridiculous (James Bond), fascist and British imperialistic (the Raj) and even more 'political' than it accused NUSAS of being.¹⁹⁹

From what can be established, the Cape branch of SACSA under Lessing and Drummond emerged shortly after the launch of the Wits SACSA and a visit to Cape Town by Wildenboer.²⁰⁰ However, Drummond denied the links to the Wits SACSA and alleged that the Cape SACSA was an entirely independent and spontaneous entity flowing from a decision taken the previous year to form such a body.²⁰¹ Shortly after this, NUSAS became privy to SACSA's confidential decision, taken in the presence of mysterious invited guests, to disaffiliate from Wits national SACSA because it was *Broederbond*-dominated. This was leaked to the *Sunday Times* by NUSAS in the hope of embarrassing Mostert and Wildenboer²⁰² and presumably also nipping in the bud a fledgling national organisation as well as scaring off potential members at UCT and Wits opposed to the NP and the *Broederbond*. Cape SACSA denied this, but changed its name to the Conservative Students' Association (CSA).²⁰³ The CSA declared its and SACSA's aim to be the absolute destruction of NUSAS. Through the mobilisation of anti-NUSAS public opinion, the CSA hoped to induce students to resign from the national union. Drummond believed that NUSAS was 'up to something' illegal and that 'by exposing NUSAS, [the CSA and SACSA would] create such

¹⁹⁶ BC 586 A2.1, Jonty Driver to Alan Murray, 1.4.1964; Alan Murray to Jonty Driver, 3.4.1964; A2.2, na, (?) Maeder Osler, 'Memo to Jonty on V.P's Exec. Visit to the Transvaal Region', nd., p. 1.

¹⁹⁷ BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents, 2.3.1964, pp. 3-4; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 1, 11.3.1964; M.J.S. Drummond to *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 2, 18.3.1964; 'Studentius' to *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 1, 11.3.1964.

¹⁹⁸ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 1, 11.3.1964.

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.* no. 1, 11.3.1964; no. 2, 18.3.1964; no. 13, 10.6.1964; *Trend*, 9.6.1964.

²⁰⁰ BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents, 2.3.1964, p. 3.

²⁰¹ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 1, 1.3.1964.

²⁰² BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents and the Executive, 'Secret document – destroy', 5.3.1964.

²⁰³ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 1, 11.3.1964.

hell that the government [would] be forced to take action'.²⁰⁴ Parallel to this line of attack, the CSA alleged that its four person executive would be augmented in due course by a secret agent who they named '005', a NUSAS turncoat and/or member of the UCT SRC who would spill the beans.²⁰⁵ This alarmed NUSAS somewhat because it thought it knew (but did not reveal) the identity of 005,²⁰⁶ but eventually 005, according to two different explanations, had either been too intimidated by the 'liberalists' or was too busy with other important work to reveal himself.²⁰⁷

In NUSAS's opinion, the CSA had learnt from the mistakes of SACSA at Wits and did not begin its operations at UCT until legally registered with the SRC.²⁰⁸ Chris Lessing submitted a constitution to the SRC which Drummond conceded was forced on the organisation.²⁰⁹ It had an open membership clause and was devoid of any overtly political aims other than exposing NUSAS, opposing multi-racialism, and advancing 'multi-nationalism' (apartheid) and conservatism.²¹⁰ This was accepted by the SRC, the student press lauding the CSA's recognition as a victory for UCT's professed tolerance and liberalism.²¹¹

Despite announcing its impending publicity campaign nothing was heard of the CSA²¹² until the 'expose' of NUSAS's controversial 'Botha's Hill Seminar' (discussed in the next chapter). Thousands of copies of a subtly edited version of Driver's Botha's Hill speech with additional commentary aimed at smearing NUSAS was printed on expensive, glossy coloured paper and was distributed on the campus by the CSA.²¹³ By eliding the moderate proposals of Driver (NUSAS should Africanise its membership and leadership and become a more activist body) with those of other seminar contributors (extremely radical proposals which Driver had specifically rejected), the pamphlet created the impression that the NUSAS president championed the transformation of the national union into the 'student wing' of the banned liberation movements, in other words, a violent organisation operating largely underground involved with subversive 'private activities'. Drummond refused to reveal the source of his

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

²⁰⁵ BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents and the Executive, 'Secret document – destroy', 5.3.1964; *Trend*, 10.3.1964, *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 2, 18.3.1964.

²⁰⁶ BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents and the Executive, 'Secret document – destroy', 5.3.1964. Jonty Driver and Maeder Osler shared a flat with a member of the NUSAS executive who they suspected of being a police informer. Because neither they nor NUSAS were engaged in anything illegal they were not concerned that their flatmate could be reporting on their activities. C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', Unpublished memoir, p. 6. A year or two later, the flatmate admitted to Maeder Osler that he had been responsible for a secret police raid on the flat. Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

²⁰⁷ BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents and the Executive, 13.4.1964.

²⁰⁸ BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents, 2.3.1964.

²⁰⁹ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 1, 11.3.1964.

²¹⁰ *ibid.* no. 2, 18.3.1964; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 6, 3.4.1964.

²¹¹ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 2, 18.3.1964.

²¹² BC 586 A2.1, Jonty Driver to Alan Murray, 1.4.1964; O1.1, Jonty Driver to Mike Bands, 1.4.1964; S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents and the Executive, 13.4.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 5, 9.4.1964.

²¹³ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 11, 20.5.1964.

funding, claiming it might have come from CSA membership fees.²¹⁴ In fact, NUSAS discovered it came from the NP and in the future would be financed by *Antikom*, a Hertzog group front.²¹⁵ *Varsity* believed that the CSA's 'exposure' of NUSAS had achieved nothing as far as augmenting the CSA's membership or inducing students to resign from NUSAS (twenty seven resigned) as most UCT students realised that the controversial ideas contained in the Botha's Hill documents were the personal views of the president or the ideas of people outside the national union.²¹⁶

It is difficult to determine the extent of the CSA's support. Its membership was originally estimated at sixteen at the time of its registration, rose to two hundred after its Botha's Hill campaign²¹⁷ and dropped to one hundred and sixteen in September 1964.²¹⁸ Some of those who joined were NUSAS supporters who planned to swamp the organisation and then sink it. In exasperation, the CSA announced that it might be forced to operate off the campus.²¹⁹ Resignations from NUSAS were also problematic as like in 1963, many were judged to be forgeries.²²⁰

Other than an information meeting at which the CSA explained its aims and attempted to distance itself from the government and *Broederbond*, the CSA hosted no public functions.²²¹ A NUSAS-CSA debate fell through because Drummond and Lessing failed to appear.²²² Matters promised to pick-up with the arrival on the campus of Gert Van Zyl, an older part-time Law student who owned a photographic studio in a caravan on Signal Hill and had been employed previously as a mining compound supervisor in the Northern Cape. Although Van Zyl denied that he was the full-time organiser which the NP had earlier threatened to plant at UCT,²²³ he was a member of the NP *Jeugbond* and an aspirant NP Member of Parliament for Wynberg, Cape Town.²²⁴ He was unable to prevent - or was perhaps one of the reasons for - the fissure of the CSA along similar lines to that of the Wits SACSA.

Before his death in a car accident,²²⁵ Lessing expressed his support (in theory) for racially open social functions at UCT in direct contravention of CSA policy.²²⁶ It is noteworthy that

²¹⁴ *Trend*, 9.6.1964.

²¹⁵ BC 586 S9, P. Mansfield to Presidents, Student Councils, Chairmen, Local NUSAS Committees, Student Press, Overseas Representatives, 'The Federation of Conservative Students (FCS)', 13.8.1965, p. 4.

²¹⁶ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 13, 10.6.1964.

²¹⁷ *Trend*, 9.6.1964.

²¹⁸ George K. Watts to *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 22, 16.9.1964.

²¹⁹ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 13, 10.6.1964; Alan Greenblo to *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 14, 17.6.1964.

²²⁰ *Trend*, 24.3.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 3, 25.3.1964; no. 13, 10.6.1964.

²²¹ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 13, 10.6.1964; no. 14, 17.6.1964.

²²² *ibid.* no. 15, 24.6.1964.

²²³ *ibid.* no. 21, 9.9.1964.

²²⁴ *ibid.* vol. 25 no. 4, 30.3.1966.

²²⁵ Raymond Suttner via email, 2.12.2014.

Van Schalkwyk, leader of the 1963 NUSAS revolt who returned to NUSAS after the Vorster attacks, never became associated with the CSA. During the SRC's debate on the ratification of the CSA constitution, Van Schalkwyk warned the CSA 'not to sink into political disrepute'.²²⁷ He remained in NUSAS and unverified reports suggested that he wanted to split NUSAS at its next congress by nominating Sir De Villiers Graaff, leader of the UP, as honorary president of NUSAS in place of Albert Luthuli.²²⁸

Conservatism at Rhodes

Reforming NUSAS from within and orientating it towards a conservative, 'students-as-such' position was the aim of many students at Rhodes in 1963-4, but an embryonic right wing organisation did attempt to make an appearance there too in the first half of 1964.

Denying that this had anything to do with the SACSA initiative at Wits,²²⁹ two members of the Rhodes Local NUSAS Committee, Adendorff and Ian Fife, requested SRC permission for the establishment of a new society which aimed at 'reforming NUSAS from within' so as to make it more acceptable to students. The society would lobby for a revised 'student-as-such' clause in the NUSAS constitution which would firstly deprive the NUSAS executive of 'a platform for promoting their own political interests' and, secondly, would ensure that NUSAS confined itself to providing practical student benefits.²³⁰ This met stiff opposition from the chairperson of the Local Committee, Renier Lock, who although a devotee of 'students-as-such', believed that the proposal was fundamentally undemocratic and was 'an attempt to takeover the functions of people duly elected and representative of students by people not elected and not representative of anybody'.²³¹ Michael Bands, the SRC president, attempted to stall this initiative by suggesting successfully that 'the reform NUSAS group' work within the Local NUSAS Committee.²³² The Local Committee successfully lobbied the SRC to adopt a 'students-as-such' attitude and it was on this basis that the NUSAS delegation, including 'the reform NUSAS group' attended the 1964 NUSAS congress.²³³ The NUSAS executive was concerned at this new development and suggested practical means by which the SRC chairperson could change this.²³⁴ Jonty Driver pointed out the inconsistency of the Local Committee and the student body for their surprising endorsement of NUSAS's

²²⁶ *Trend*, 26.5.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 14, 7.6.1964.

²²⁷ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 2, 18.3.1964.

²²⁸ BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents, 2.3.1964, p. 5.

²²⁹ *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 1, 5.3.1964.

²³⁰ BC 586 O1.1, Ian Fife to 'Chairman, Student Representative Council, Rhodes University', 3.3.1964.

²³¹ *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 2, 12.3.1964.

²³² BC 586 O1.1, Michael Bands to Jonty Driver, 9.3.1964, p. 2; 8.4.1964, p. 2; 'Minutes of an SRC Meeting, Rhodes University, 16.3.1964, p. 4; *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 3, 19.3.1964.

²³³ *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 3, 19.3.1964.

²³⁴ BC 586 O1.1, Michael Bands to Jonty Driver, 1.4.1964, pp. 3-4.

campaign against the Bantu Law Amendment Act.²³⁵ This law was concerned with influx control and the rights of urban Africans and was thus of very little practical concern to white, middle-class, 'students-as-such' Rhodes students other than perhaps the number of domestic workers their parents were permitted to employ. Perhaps, as in the past, the real dissatisfaction with NUSAS was not that it was 'too political' but that it pursued the wrong politics as the UP had also rejected the Bantu Law Amendment Bill.

'Students-as-such' was difficult to dislodge as it was championed by so many within the Rhodes student establishment.²³⁶ *Rhodeo*, deliberately misreported a speech delivered to the student body by Maeder Osler, NUSAS vice-president, claiming that he had said that NUSAS was 'conservative' and 'not political' whereas he had said precisely the opposite.²³⁷ Most of the more than two hundred new students who joined NUSAS in 1964 (bringing the total number to more than two-thirds of the Rhodes student body) did so after Osler's visit²³⁸ but it is not clear whether they did so because they believed NUSAS to be radical or conservative.

The inroads of a conservative students' society at Rhodes was even less impressive than on other campuses. Like all NUSAS centres, the Rhodes SRC and interested campus organisations were invited by Mostert of SACSA to become part of a new nationwide, anti-NUSAS conservative organisation.²³⁹ When it appeared that this plea had fallen on fertile ground, Driver intervened. He advised the Rhodes SRC chairperson to stress the parochialism and individualism of Rhodes in the hope that a Rhodes conservative society would not form part of a national organisation which NUSAS hoped would not emerge. James Willett-Clarke, a colonialist²⁴⁰ and a Nationalist and the suspected SACSA contact on the SRC,²⁴¹ was persuaded to put a hold on his plans and eventually joined NUSAS so as to attend the 1964 NUSAS congress. As like many before him, he experienced a partial congress conversion.²⁴² Through his contacts with the UCT CSA, Alan Charrington-Smith - another upper class colonialist, but a UP supporter, established the Rhodes Association of

²³⁵ BC 586 O1.1, Michael Bands to Jonty Driver, 8.4.1964; Jonty Driver to Michael Bands, 9.4.1964; *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 6, 16.4.1964.

²³⁶ BC 586 A2.2, na. (?) Maeder Osler, 'Memo to Jonty on the Vice-President's visit in March 1964', nd., pp. 2, 4, 6.

²³⁷ BC 586 A2.2, Maeder Osler to Jonty Driver, 13.3.1964; O1.1, Jonty Driver to Maeder Osler, 11.3.1964; Maeder Osler to the Editor of *Rhodeo*, 13.3.1964; Gill Gane to *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 2, 12.3.1964; Maeder Osler to *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 4, 26.3.1964.

²³⁸ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 45; *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 4, 26.3.1964.

²³⁹ BC 586 O1.1, Michael Bands to Jonty Driver, 22.2.1964.

²⁴⁰ Andre P. Brink, a member of the Rhodes staff in the 1960s, '70s and '80s described a group on the campus thus: 'There were still the old colonial types who habitually looked down on "locals" and even more so "natives"'. A.P. Brink, *A fork in the road: a memoir*, Vintage, London, 2010, p. 349.

²⁴¹ BC 586 A2.2, na. (?) Maeder Osler, 'Memo to Jonty on the Vice-President's visit in March 1964', nd., p. 6; O1.1, Michael Bands to Jonty Driver, 9.3.1964; B1 Congress 1964, J.F. Willett-Clarke, 'Personal Report to the SRC on the N.U.S.A.S.'.

²⁴² B1 Congress 1964, J.F. Willett-Clarke, 'Personal Report to the SRC on the N.U.S.A.S.'.

Conservative Students (ACS).²⁴³ The ACS was officially launched in the Grahamstown Botanical Gardens in July 1964. Professor Bradshaw, a member of both *Antikom* and the SABC Board²⁴⁴ was its proposed president²⁴⁵ and was to provide the organisation with a list of 'conservative aims'.²⁴⁶ When these materialised, they were similar to those associated with the American anti-communist ultra-right. The ACS's founding members were largely theological students²⁴⁷ forcing the Anglican Students' Club to officially dissociate itself from the ACS because of the surprising number of Anglican seminarians in the group.²⁴⁸ Despite its initially vague and undefined policy, the ACS's two dozen members were united in their dislike of NUSAS and the re-election of Albert Luthuli as honorary president of the national union.

NUSAS and the right wing at Durban

Holding on to its radical left wing policy in the aftermath of the Vorster attacks,²⁴⁹ as well as the urgent need to break the student apathy at Durban, lent impetus to the nascent right wing anti-NUSAS movement at Durban.²⁵⁰

Shortly after the arrival of SACSA at Wits, Dr Aubrey Levine appeared at Durban to spearhead the Natal conservative movement. Like Mostert at Wits and Van Zyl at UCT, Levine was also an older part-time student in his late twenties. However, unlike Mostert, whose political past and affiliations were unclear, Levine was definitely a Nationalist. He was then the chair of the NP's Durban Point branch and was a past member of its Houghton branch. Whilst a medical student at Pretoria University he had served on the executive of the South African Union of Jewish and Zionist Students and despite his faith, on the ASB's too.²⁵¹ NUSAS regarded him as a dangerous, experienced and articulate opponent and like Mostert, far more intelligent than most right wingers.²⁵² Rumours circulated that Levine was

²⁴³ *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 3, 19.3.1964; no. 5, 9.4.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 17, 12.8.1964.

²⁴⁴ *Antikom* was primarily a religious anti-communist organisation which organised the *Volkskongres*. It included in its ranks some non-Afrikaans churches, organisations and individuals such as Professor Bradshaw and the apartheid-supporting Church of England in South Africa. BC 586 S9, Peter Mansfield to Presidents, Student Councils, Local NUSAS Committees, Student Press, Overseas Representatives, 'The Federation of Conservative Students (FCS)', p. 2; W. Visser, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-333.

²⁴⁵ BC 586 S9, Peter Mansfield to Presidents, Student Councils, Local NUSAS Committees, Student Press, Overseas Representatives, 'The Federation of Conservative Students (FCS)', p. 2; *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 12, 6.8.1964.

²⁴⁶ *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 15, 27.8.1964.

²⁴⁷ *ibid.* no. 12, 6.8.1964. The constitution of the ACS (renamed Eastern Province Conservative Students Association) contained a quote from Teilhard de Chardin. BC 586 S9, 'Eastern Province Conservative Students' Association', 31.8.1964.

²⁴⁸ *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 14, 20.8.1964.

²⁴⁹ BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents, 2.3.1964, p. 6.

²⁵⁰ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 43; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 12, 4.6.1964.

²⁵¹ *Rhodeo* vol. 13 no. 5, 26.8.1959.

²⁵² BC 586 A2.1, Jonty Driver to Alan Murray, 1.4.1964; A2.2, Maeder Osler to Jonty Driver, 5.6.1964; O1.1, Jonty Driver to Michael Bands, 1.4.1964.

a member of the Security Branch, which Levine denied.²⁵³ However, his subsequent career within the SADF during which time he perpetrated human rights atrocities²⁵⁴ lent an air of veracity to this allegation.

Durban, traditionally the most conservative university centre in NUSAS, appeared ripe for a right wing students' organisation. There was very definite anti-NUSAS feeling on the campus, a hangover from the Vorster attacks, and an extreme apathy, on which, as noted with regard to conservative groupings on other campuses, the right wing intended capitalising. In October 1963, eighty students signed a petition objecting to Albert Luthuli and Sir Garfield Todd (liberal Southern Rhodesian politician) holding honorary offices in NUSAS.²⁵⁵ At a student mass meeting in March 1964, attended by only seventy five students, seven students ('fascist fools' in the opinion of Osler)²⁵⁶ supported a vote of no-confidence in NUSAS. However, what was more significant about this meeting were the entirely different type of questions which Osler fielded from NUSAS dissidents. These related to NUSAS's sources of funding, its method of enrolment and how it was possible for Fort Hare to continue playing an active role in NUSAS.²⁵⁷ As noted, the *Broederbond* had or would shortly identify NUSAS's two weaknesses, namely its foreign funding and automatic affiliation and would target these to break the organisation.

Shortly after the mass meeting, it was announced that fifteen Durban students supported Wits SACSA which still had pretensions of being a national body. It was believed that SACSA was 'gathering momentum' as 'anti-left wing and anti-NUSAS feeling deepens'.²⁵⁸ A constitution for a 'South African Students' Association' was placed before the Durban SRC for ratification. As with the CSA, Levine learnt from the blunders committed by the Wits SACSA. Thus his organisation was open to all, would promote (white) English-Afrikaans

²⁵³ *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 8, 4.6.1964.

²⁵⁴ From the late 1960s onwards he headed the Psychiatric Unit of the SADF. He was responsible for the brutal overseeing of 'social deviants' confined at Voortrekkerhoogte and Greefswald (Mapungubwe). Even more controversially, he developed and oversaw the SADF's electro-shock aversion therapy and gender reassignment programmes which were intended to 'cure' homosexuality and eradicate it from the army. Shock therapy was used on conscientious objectors too. Levine fled to Canada in 1995, allegedly with the help of his far-right wing North American contacts and refused to return to South Africa to answer to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In 2012 he was found guilty in Canada of sexually abusing his male patients. C. Adams, 'Timeline: Dr Audrey Levin (sic)', *Global News*, 7.5.2013, <http://www.globalnews.ca/news/541532/timeline-dr-aut>, accessed 10.6.2013; C. McGreal, 'Canadian psychiatrist "Dr Shock" stands trial on sexual abuse charges', *Guardian*, 10.10.2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/oct/10/canadian-psychiatrist-dr-shock-trial> accessed 28.7.2013; L. Baldwin Ragaven, L. London, J. De Gruchy (eds), *An ambulance of the wrong colour: health professionals, human rights and ethics in South Africa*, UCT Press, Rondebosch, 1999, pp. 121-123; T. Jones, *Psychiatry, mental institutions and the mad in apartheid South Africa*, Routledge, New York and Abingdon, 2012, pp. 1-2, 124-131, <http://books.google.co.za/books?id=CMJJPJeTYQC8> accessed 28.7.2013; B. Munro, *South Africa and the dream of love to come: queer sexuality and the struggle for freedom*, University of Minneapolis Press, Minneapolis, 2012, pp. 98-100, <http://books.google.co.za/books?id=vwes4feq7b4c8> accessed 28.7.2013.

²⁵⁵ *NUSAS Newsletter*, 31.3.1964, p. 31.

²⁵⁶ BC 586 A2.2, Maeder Osler to Jonty Driver, 13.3.1964, p. 2.

²⁵⁷ BC 586 A2.2, na. (?) Maeder Osler, 'Memo to Jonty on the Vice-President's visit in March 1964', nd., p. 11.

²⁵⁸ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 3, 16.3.1964.

relations and was not affiliated to any political party.²⁵⁹ However, the SRC turned down this constitution because it was so vague that it was hardly a constitution at all and it felt there was no need for such a campus society.²⁶⁰ Levine subsequently complained of his victimisation to the Sunday press.²⁶¹

All was quiet on the Durban front until Driver addressed the student body on 5 May 1964. He told Durban students that they were members of a white tribal college and that their conservatism was negative and stemmed from laziness, fear and apathy.²⁶² More damning however, was the misrepresentation of this speech in the national and student press. Driver was alleged to have said that 'no racials should belong in NUSAS' and that 'racials in NUSAS were fools' and should thus resign.²⁶³ What he did say was that NUSAS had open membership and did not ask members their political affiliations, but there was a contradiction when a racist joined a non-racial organisation. The use of strong words and specifically 'fools' was suggested by some on the Durban SRC to break the apathy on the campus and evoke some interest in NUSAS even if it was negative.²⁶⁴ Even more importantly, and this was not publicised at all, was the need to retain a radical stance in the face of criticism by UNNE. UNNE was the only legally affiliated black university centre in NUSAS and was under pressure from a powerful anti-NUSAS ASUSA lobby. UNNE believed that NUSAS was being pulled 'backwards and downwards by conservatives', specifically at Durban and wanted Driver 'to pose a question on the UN.D [Durban] campus which might make certain members think about the apparent contradiction in being a racist and belonging to NUSAS'.²⁶⁵ This 'fools' speech created a furore and resulted in more students resigning from NUSAS and a number of SRCs contemplating passing motions of censure of Driver.²⁶⁶ Driver explained himself in person at Durban and UCT a few days later,²⁶⁷ but by then a much greater crisis had begun to unfold.

A copy of Driver's confidential and explosive paper on the future role of the South African student movement which he had delivered to the Botha's Hill Leadership Training Seminar a few days before, landed up in the possession of Aubrey Levine. Levine had two thousand

²⁵⁹ BC 586 S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents and the Executive, Appendix 2, p. 3.

²⁶⁰ BC 586 A2.1, Jonty Driver to Alan Murray, 1.4.1964; S9, Jonty Driver to SRC Presidents and the Executive, Appendix 2, p. 3.

²⁶¹ BC 586 O1.1, 'President' (Jonty Driver) to Michael Bands, 1.4.1964.

²⁶² *Dome*, 14.5.1964.

²⁶³ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, pp. 43-44; *Dome*, 14.5.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 9, 13.5.1964; no. 11, 27.5.1964; no. 12, 4.6.1964; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 12, 22.5.1964.

²⁶⁴ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, pp. 43-44; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 11, 27.5.1964.

²⁶⁵ BC 586 B4.1, Maeder Osler to the Executive, 'For information SRC Presidents only', 22.5.1964, p. 3.

²⁶⁶ BC 586 O5.1, UCT SRC Minutes, 14.5.1964, p. 3.

²⁶⁷ *Nux* no. 4, 22.5.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 10, 24.5.1964; no. 11, 27.5.1964.

copies²⁶⁸ of his subtly reworked anonymous version of the speech²⁶⁹ distributed at Durban just before Driver's explanatory meeting on the campus. Levine then convened a meeting of his own in one of the residences at which he falsely claimed that NUSAS advocated violence and bloodshed²⁷⁰ in that it planned to submerge itself in the violent revolutionary liberation movements. This resulted in one hundred and fifty students resigning from NUSAS.²⁷¹ The die was cast. Shortly after this, the Durban SRC disaffiliated from NUSAS. This was primarily because it was not privy to the 'private activities'²⁷² of NUSAS mentioned in the Botha's Hill paper which presumably it believed were subversive (these were in fact a literacy project and a leadership training project in Botswana) but also because it believed that less than half the student body supported NUSAS.²⁷³ The chairperson of the NUSAS Local Committee resigned too, not because she was disillusioned with NUSAS as was initially thought, but because she had become totally overwrought by Levine's harrying questions which she was unable to answer as she had not seen the original Driver speech. The powerful Accounting Students' Society secretly decided to sever its ties with NUSAS should its inquiry into the national union recommend this.²⁷⁴ The precipitous decision by the SRC and other bodies demonstrates the tenuous position of NUSAS at Durban prior to Botha's Hill and the consequent ease with which outside forces were able to manipulate this to their advantage. In the midst of this NUSAS vacuum, the Durban SRC approved the constitution of Levine's new University of Natal Durban Students' Association (UNDSA). UNDSA was a whites-only society which sought white English and Afrikaans student unity and was headed in an honorary capacity by Theo Gerdener, leader of the NP in Natal.²⁷⁵

By the middle of June, the right wing had begun to lose some of its steam in Durban. Perhaps because of the intervention of Osler,²⁷⁶ the SRC rescinded its motion of disaffiliation until after it had seen what transpired at the forthcoming July NUSAS congress where it intended to push a conservative, reformist line.²⁷⁷ However, the student body was still to decide the fate of NUSAS on the campus.²⁷⁸ At a three hundred-strong mass meeting on 2 June 1964, attended by Osler, no motion of disaffiliation was moved. However, Levine and his henchmen attempted to 'lay down the conditions for the Durban delegation attending the

²⁶⁸ BC 586 B4.1, Maeder Osler to the Executive, 'For information SRC Presidents only', 22.5.1964, pp. 2, 5; *Nux* no. 4, 22.5.1964.

²⁶⁹ BC 586 S9, 'Alan Matisonn confidential', na., nd. c. 1964, pp. 1-2.

²⁷⁰ BC 586 B4.1, Maeder Osler to the Executive, 'For information SRC Presidents only', 22.5.1964, pp. 2, 5; *Nux* no. 4, 22.5.1964.

²⁷¹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 44.

²⁷² Explained in chapter nine.

²⁷³ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 44; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 12, 22.5.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 11, 27.5.1964; *Nux* no. 5, 4.6.1964.

²⁷⁴ BC 586 A2.2, Maeder Osler to Jonty (Driver) and Ros (Traub), 5.6.1964.

²⁷⁵ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1964, p. 19; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 11, 27.5.1964; no. 13, 10.6.1964.

²⁷⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 12, 22.5.1964.

²⁷⁷ *Trend*, 26.5.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 11, 27.5.1964; *Nux* no. 5, 4.6.1964.

²⁷⁸ *Nux* no. 5, 4.6.1964.

NUSAS congress' which would effectively have precluded NUSAS from taking a stand on apartheid. However, this move failed dismally with only seven students supporting it.²⁷⁹ This was symptomatic of the ridicule and contempt in which Levine had come to be held at Durban and the general distrust students had of his motives.²⁸⁰ Nevertheless, Levine and UNDSA continued to plough their furrow speaking on the somewhat incongruous topic of English-Afrikaans white relations at a packed meeting at UNNE attended also by a hundred chanting, placard bearing, anti-Levine Durban students. The meeting was chaos, Levine complaining that his freedom of speech had been violated. However, the end result was positive for NUSAS. Critics of NUSAS at UNNE, even the rabidly ASUSA ones, were so outraged by Levine that NUSAS's stock rose appreciably on the campus.²⁸¹ This was certainly not the intention of Levine or UNDSA and 'national' SACSA which planned to open branches at the black universities with a view eventually to establishing a national 'multi-national' conservative organisation.

Black campuses were not spared the sinister attentions of the shadowy right wing. In 1964, a man named 'Spies', who claimed to have been both an editor of Pretoria University's student newspaper, *Die Perdeby* and a member of the ASB executive, arrived at Johannesburg Training Institute for Indian Teachers (JTIIT) as a 'student-staff liaison officer'. He seemed to get on well with the SRC²⁸² and claimed to be working towards splitting the ASB and transforming it into a racially inclusive body. This would be achieved by JTIIT disaffiliating from NUSAS and joining the ASB. The ASB would then see that Indians were 'also human' and would then undergo a 'racial reformation'. Osler was deeply suspicious of Spies and exposed the ASB and Spies's scheme to the student body.²⁸³

White co-operation and the Federation of Conservative Students

The white student co-operation movement was on the march again. The UOFS SRC sent a telegram congratulating Durban on its disaffiliation from NUSAS²⁸⁴ and offered its co-operation²⁸⁵ while members of the Rhodes SRC visited the Afrikaans-medium universities in May 1964.²⁸⁶ This resulted in an inter-SRC conference in early August 1964²⁸⁷ at which

²⁷⁹ BC 586 A2.2, Maeder Osler to Jonty (Driver) and Ros (Traub), 5.6.1964.

²⁸⁰ *ibid.*

²⁸¹ *ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

²⁸² BC 586 A2.1, Alan Murray to Jonty Driver, 2.3.1964; A2.2, Maeder Osler, 'Memo to Jonty on V.P.'s Exec. Visit to Transvaal Region', nd.

²⁸³ BC 586 A2.2, Maeder Osler, 'Memo to Jonty on V.P.'s Exec. Visit to Transvaal Region', nd.

²⁸⁴ *Nux* no. 5, 4.6.1964.

²⁸⁵ BC 586 S9, Maeder Osler to Presidents, Student Councils, Chairmen, NUSAS Committees, Student Relations Officers, 'Report of the NUSAS delegation to the First Convention of Conservative Students in South Africa and to the 1964 Inter-SRC Conference', 20.8.1964.

²⁸⁶ *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 9, 21.5.1964.

²⁸⁷ *ibid.* no. 13, 13.8.1964.

Rhodes was encouraged to break with NUSAS and form an 'English Bond'.²⁸⁸ More significantly, Dirk Herbst, the president of the ASB, unexpectedly approached Osler after a student body meeting at Wits in May 1964 and raised the issue of representation at what were presumably inter-SRC conferences envisaged by the ASB in the future.²⁸⁹ The deeply divided ASB was evidently under pressure to change. It was composed of, on the one hand, co-operationists and idealistic 'total apartheiders' and on the other, far-right wingers like Alex Antonites who in his capacity as international relations director had made contact with fascist and neo-Nazi groups in Europe and North America including the Klu Klux Klan.²⁹⁰ The theme of the ASB's annual congress held in July 1964 was 'Liberalism'. Like the recently concluded *Volkskongres*, delegates failed to differentiate liberalism from communism and descended into absurdity when discussing the political, social, cultural and religious dimensions of the concept.²⁹¹ Piet Koornhof, a guest speaker and founder member of the Hertzogite 'Sunergia Press'²⁹² announced that 'conservatism had come into its own'. He contended that the 'victories of 1948 and 1961' had been 'won in the classrooms' and thus the ASB should be kept 'pure' so as to protect the *volk*.²⁹³ The congress heeded his advice and elected as its new president the ultra-conservative Paul de Beer,²⁹⁴ a *Nederduits Hervormde* Church theology student, chairperson of the Pretoria SRC, an anonymous Hertzog Group 'smear letter writer'²⁹⁵ and later editor of the 'openly' anti-Semitic Hertzog Group publication, *Boomerang*.²⁹⁶ Nonetheless, the idealistic, more 'verligte' (enlightened) Herbst drew a distinction between a 'liberal' and 'liberalist',²⁹⁷ defended NUSAS in its fight for automatic affiliation, called 'for a dynamic attitude in the mind of the Afrikaner student'²⁹⁸ and like many

²⁸⁸ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1964, p. 18.

²⁸⁹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, pp. 56-57.

²⁹⁰ BC 586 A2.1, Jonty Driver to Dave Adler, 11.8.1964; Maeder Osler to Dave Adler, 30.3.1965, p. 1; B1 Presidential Report 1965, p. 67; *Nux* no. 3, 13.4.1965; *Trend*, 13.4.1965; *Varsity* vol. 19 no. 10, 19.5.1965; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 8, 9.4.1965.

²⁹¹ *Cape Times*, 22.7.1964; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 15, 31.7.1964; *Nux* no. 8, August 1964; *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 12, 6.8.1964.

²⁹² J.H.P. Serfontein, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

²⁹³ BC 586 B1 1964, Bill Shellard, '1964 ASB Congress Report presented to the SRC on the 6th of August 1964', p. 6.

²⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 5. As a cabinet minister in the 1970s he was responsible for hundreds of forced removals of Africans to the Bantustans. Subsequently he co-habited with a black woman, fathering a number of children with her. He also joined the ANC. 'Piet Koornhof, a man of contradictions', *Mail and Guardian*, 15.11.2007, <http://mg.co.za/article/2007-11-15-piet-koornhof-a-man-of-contradictions> accessed 10.5.2015.

²⁹⁵ Letters were written to Afrikaans newspapers under pseudonyms which denigrated *verligte* editors and other *verligte* establishment figures.

²⁹⁶ J.H.P. Serfontein, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.

²⁹⁷ BC 586 B1 1964, Bill Shellard, '1964 ASB Congress Report presented to the SRC on the 6th of August 1964', p. 3. It is not clear what this means. The terms could have been lost in translation as this congress report is an unofficial one written in English by an observer from JCE. Perhaps Herbst was attempting to distinguish between political liberals and theological liberals as well as libertines. Like the *Volkskongres*, the ASB concluded that women's emancipation, free love, pornography, new Afrikaans literature and the breakdown of the (white Afrikaans-speaking) family, the signs of which included intermarriage between Afrikaners and non-Afrikaners, child neglect, the soaring divorce rate and the plummeting birth rate were all consequences of liberalism. *Cape Times*, 22.7.1964; *Nux* no. 8, August 1964; *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 12, 6.8.1964.

²⁹⁸ BC 586 B1 1964, Bill Shellard, '1964 ASB Congress Report presented to the SRC on the 6th of August 1964', p. 3.

before him, exhorted those present to accept the African student as an equal and not an inferior being.²⁹⁹ As far as white student relations were concerned, the congress discussed with the JCE observers the old NP dream of English-speaking students co-operating with their Afrikaans-speaking compatriots within a Christian National framework.³⁰⁰

Shortly after the conclusion of the ASB congress, the SRCs of Stellenbosch and Pretoria announced that a conference would be convened in August 1964 to form a third national student organisation. This new grouping would oppose NUSAS and work in conjunction with the ASB and would specifically target the one thousand students who had recently resigned from NUSAS after Botha's Hill.³⁰¹

In early August 1964, Gert van Zyl of the UCT CSA invited the SRCs of Durban, JCE and Rhodes to attend the 'First Convention of Conservative Students of South Africa' in Cape Town. There was much confusion regarding the invitations, evidence of competing forces with different aims and objectives operating tangentially to one another. JCE was informed that the ASB and all the SRCs were invited, and on the basis of this information, it would appear that NUSAS and the other NUSAS-affiliated SRCs decided that they too were eligible to attend the convention.

It was noted by a number of observers that the coming together of all the Afrikaans- and English-medium SRCs (including UNNE's) as well NUSAS and the ASB was, whether it was intentional or not, an historic occasion that had not occurred since the early 1930s.³⁰² However, after the conclusion of the opening speech by Kruger of the UCT CSA on the 'Twilight struggle against communism' in which Kruger, like Barry Goldwater, equated liberalism with communism,³⁰³ the historic convention descended into chaos. With different agendas and invitations, no group was clear about the capacity in which it was invited or to what it had been invited. Of the English-medium centres, it seemed as if only the Durban SRC and the campus conservative societies were intended as delegates. Moreover, the ASB stated that it had come to a conference to launch an English conservative organisation and that those present were not representative of English conservative opinion. NUSAS was accused of deliberately attempting to sabotage the proceedings by including in its delegation a coloured student, Kenney Parker, the outgoing NUSAS vice-president.³⁰⁴ This was partly

²⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁰¹ BC 586 S9, Maeder Osler to Presidents, Student Councils, Chairmen, NUSAS Committees, Student Relations Officers, 'Report of the NUSAS delegation to the First Convention of Conservative Students in South Africa and to the 1964 Inter-SRC Conference', 20.8.1964.

³⁰² BC 586 S9, 'Impressions of the UN.P delegation to the National Convention of Conservative Students', na., nd.; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 17, 14.8.1964; *Nux* no. 9, 24.8.1964.

³⁰³ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 17, 12.8.1964.

³⁰⁴ BC 586 S9, 'Impressions of the UN.P delegation to the National Convention of Conservative Students', na., nd.; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 17, 12.8.1964; *Nux* no. 9, 24.8.1964.

true as Driver's 'main purpose in attending was to take a sufficiently strong line on non-racialism to ensure that the ASB refused to co-operate'.³⁰⁵ With a rude chairperson and no standing rules of procedure, the conference soon fell apart.³⁰⁶ Levenstein of the UCT SRC then invited all SRCs to attend an inter-SRC conference at which NUSAS, the ASB and the campus conservative organisations would observe. After concurring with outsiders over lunch, the ASB and its affiliated SRCs agreed to this arrangement.

At this new conference the ASB interrogated NUSAS about the Botha's Hill Seminar and voiced its objections to NUSAS equating the ASB to the *Broederbond*, arguing that NUSAS could similarly be equated with communism. Wits and UNNE pursued the ASB-*Broederbond*-NP connection and debate became heated, particularly after UNNE criticised the ASB for its support of racial inequality.³⁰⁷ The ASB then accused NUSAS of breaking the observer status agreement in that its two additional representatives remained at the discussion table with their name tags displayed while the ASB's additional representatives had (recently) moved into the audience. In the opinion of NUSAS and its affiliates, the motive behind this contrived pettiness was that Parker was coloured. After informing Driver that he had wrecked the conference and that there could never be any co-operation between NUSAS and the ASB while he was at the helm of NUSAS, Paul de Beer and the rest of the ASB executive stalked out of the conference, never to return, followed shortly thereafter by the ASB SRCs.³⁰⁸

To NUSAS and the SRCs of Wits, UNP and UCT, it was the ASB that had destroyed the conference, but JCE and some members of the Rhodes SRC did not entirely agree.³⁰⁹ JCE argued that NUSAS should not have appointed Parker to the delegation as he was firstly not a current member of the executive and secondly NUSAS knew that the Afrikaans centres would object to his race.³¹⁰ NUSAS justified its decision by explaining that it had been invited to send three delegates, Parker was in Cape Town and available, he spoke Afrikaans and knew many of the Stellenbosch delegates personally.

The ASB walkout did not mark the end of inter-SRC get-togethers. The following day, Van Zyl, the ASB and its SRCs convened a new conference. To this NUSAS and its affiliates

³⁰⁵ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', Unpublished memoir, p. 3.

³⁰⁶ BC 586 S9, 'Impressions of the UN.P delegation to the National Convention of Conservative Students', na., nd.; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 17, 12.8.1964; *Nux* no. 9, 24.8.1964.

³⁰⁷ BC 586 S9, Maeder Osler to Presidents, Student Councils, Chairmen, NUSAS Committees, Student Relations Officers, 'Report of the NUSAS delegation to the First Convention of Conservative Students in South Africa and to the 1964 Inter-SRC Conference', 20.8.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 17, 12.8.1964; *Nux* no. 9, 24.8.1964.

³⁰⁸ BC 586 S9, Maeder Osler to Presidents, Student Councils, Chairmen, NUSAS Committees, Student Relations Officers, 'Report of the NUSAS delegation to the First Convention of Conservative Students in South Africa and to the 1964 Inter-SRC Conference', 20.8.1964, pp. 9-10; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 17, 12.8.1964; 9.9.1964; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 17, 14.8.1964; *Nux* no. 9, 24.8.1964.

³⁰⁹ *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 13, 13.8.1964.

³¹⁰ BC 586 A2.1, Dave Adler to Maeder Osler, 29.8.1964, pp. 2-3; B1 Presidential Report 1965, pp. 32-33.

were not invited, and from this a national, whites-only Federation of Conservative Students emerged.³¹¹ The organisation immediately came under fire from within. Charrington-Smith from Rhodes resigned from the FCS because he alleged it was NP- and *Broederbond*-inspired.³¹² Evidently in a bid to break the new federation, the UCT SRC president disingenuously questioned the anomaly of the FCS affiliating to the all-white ASB when one of its members, the UCT CSA, was open to all.³¹³

Conclusion

Despite a sustained year-long, multi-pronged campaign, the state and its allies were unable to deliver the mortal blow to NUSAS by inducing its members to leave the organisation *en masse*. Though English-speaking students were believed to be more conservative and significantly more apathetic than in the past, the Universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand, and to a lesser extent even Rhodes, Pietermaritzburg and Durban, remained bastions of liberalism. Few at Wits and UCT questioned the commitment to academic non-segregation and a sizeable number rejected campus social segregation too, believing that all students had the right to attend and participate in all university social functions, including dances and sport and that no organisation had the right to discriminate and organise racially closed social events. It is thus not surprising then, in the light of the general campus political outlook and general student apathy bemoaned by student leaders across the ideological spectrum, that the new conservative societies made little headway at the NUSAS-affiliated centres.

Campus conservatives, whether they identified with the new right wing societies or not, came from a variety of social and political/ideological backgrounds. This made it unlikely that they would successfully work together in one organisation for a sustained period of time. Many campus conservatives, mostly English-speaking, but including a small number of Afrikaans-speakers were supporters of the right wing of the UP. Many English-speaking conservatives identified with the NP, albeit sometimes grudgingly, many of them being actively or latently anti-Afrikaans and deeply suspicious of the *Broederbond*. Van Zyl recognised that the 'Nationalist stigma' was an impediment to the growth of both the UCT CSA and the FCS and for this reason announced that he would not seek re-election to leadership positions in either body as they needed to be seen to be led by English-speakers

³¹¹ BC 586 S9, 'Impressions of the UN.P delegation to the National Convention of Conservative Students', na., nd.; P. Mansfield to Presidents, Student Councils, Chairmen Local Committees, Student Press and Overseas Representatives, 'The Federation of Conservative Students FCS', 13.8.1965; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 17, 12.8.1964; *Nux* no. 8, 18.8.1964; no. 9, 24.8.1964.

³¹² *Varsity*, 9.9.1964.

³¹³ BC 586 S9, Maeder Osler to SRC Presidents, Chairpersons of Local Committees, Student Relations Officers, 'Report of the NUSAS delegation to the First Convention of Conservative Students in South Africa and to the 1964 Inter-SRC Conference' 20.8.1964, p. 11.

with English names.³¹⁴ Perhaps 'Nationalist stigma' was an euphemism for anti-Afrikaans sentiment. *Broederbond* domination was the reason for the UCT CSA severing its ties with Wits SACSA and the Rhodes conservative society leader resigning from the FCS. It was also the stated reason for the UP pulling out of and dissociating from SACSA.

One of the most important reasons for the inability of Vorster and the conservative student organisations to make deep inroads into NUSAS's student base was the fact that NUSAS still had the backing of the UP. The UCT resignees returned to NUSAS after Marais Steyn defended the national union against Vorster and the SABC. The failure of Wits SACSA was partly because the UP withdrew from it. Once the UP abandoned NUSAS, NUSAS's fortunes could change. The state and its allies realised this. In what was perhaps an attempt to embarrass the UP into disowning NUSAS, the NP newspaper, *Die Vaderland*, speculated about the allegedly close relationship of the UP to NUSAS, its 'pet children' (troetelkinders).³¹⁵

The state did not give up its bid to destroy NUSAS and the liberal ethos of the NUSAS campuses. The second stage in this campaign began in 1965 when the state threw the ball into the court of the university authorities and issued them a veiled ultimatum. The university administrations were given the invidious task of enforcing campus apartheid according to the even more stringent social apartheid laws being legislated and ensuring that student government was brought into line which included abandoning automatic affiliation to NUSAS. Failing to do this would leave the universities vulnerable to the withdrawal of their state subsidies and direct state intervention in their affairs. This will be examined in chapter ten.

Securing the ideological rejection of NUSAS by its mass student base and so precipitating a conservative slideaway would require one or more of three new factors. Firstly, that the right wing societies developed a coherent ideology of conservatism and a programme of action which moved beyond simply opposing NUSAS and communism. Secondly, that NUSAS moved so far to the left that its policy became totally unacceptable to its SRCs. This NUSAS would come close to doing when it presented its seminar on the future of NUSAS and the South African student movement at Botha's Hill in April 1964. Thirdly, that the state could prove conclusively, not just through smears, innuendoes and by association, that NUSAS was involved in illegal and subversive activities. The African Resistance Movement revelations discussed in chapter nine had the potential to do just that.

³¹⁴ *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 10, 19.5.1965.

³¹⁵ *Die Vaderland*, 26.2.1964; 28.2.1964 reproduced in B1 Presidential Report 1964, pp. 93-94.

CHAPTER NINE

In search of a relevant political role: the 'Botha's Hill Seminar' and the African Resistance Movement, 1964-1965

Introduction

Forty years after its establishment, NUSAS faced the greatest crisis of its existence. In an attempt to transform itself into an activist organisation, the 1964 NUSAS National Leadership Seminar discussed a number of controversial models for a fundamental restructuring of the national union. This was demanded of it by firstly, its commitment to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights; secondly, its radical black membership; thirdly, the challenge posed to it by the creation of the new black African student organisations; and fourthly, the growing hostility of assertive Africanist student groupings on the African continent. The Botha's Hill Seminar, as it came to be known, had unintended and far-reaching negative consequences for NUSAS which played into the hands of those intent on destroying the national union: the government and the right wing. At the same time, a small but significant number of current and former student leaders, also seeking a meaningful role for themselves in the post-Sharpeville liberation struggle, were arrested and subsequently found guilty of participating in the sabotage organisation, the African Resistance Movement (ARM). This chapter will attempt firstly to understand why radical liberal student activists became increasingly more radical as the 1960s progressed, to an extent that many of them effectively abandoned some of the key tenets of liberalism, including liberalism's commitment to non-violence. Secondly, the chapter will analyse the Botha's Hill Seminar and its attempts to reposition NUSAS within the liberation movement. Thirdly, it will examine the ARM in terms of student involvement and the consequences of this for NUSAS. It will be argued that both Botha's Hill and the ARM were different responses to Sharpeville and the increasingly repressive socio-political environment which followed it. Moreover, as in the case of the United States, where the Revolutionary Youth Movement and its extra-legal 'Weatherman' off-shoot grew out of the radical, white, middle-class Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), so too did the ARM, to some extent, have its incubation in NUSAS.

Domestic factors leading to the radicalisation of white liberals

What factors were responsible for the radicalisation of liberal whites, particularly students, to the extent that some of them disavowed the liberal tenet of non-violence? Firstly, the passage of the Extension of University and Fort Hare Transfer Acts led to a deep sense of disillusion and despondency among many politically conscious students that even opposition

on the scale and magnitude of the university apartheid campaign, sustained over a long period of time, had ultimately failed to persuade the government to alter course.¹ Far more importantly, the belief that Sharpeville marked the beginning of the end of white rule in South Africa was sharply dashed by the violence of the uprising's suppression and the subsequent steps taken to establish a police state. The banning of the liberation movements demonstrated that legal peaceful protest was becoming even more difficult to pursue.² Linked to this was the failure of the calls for a national convention in 1961 to peacefully negotiate South Africa's future. Many liberals feared that the violence of apartheid and Afrikaner nationalism was pushing the African majority to a more extreme nationalism and that, were there not some timely and drastic intervention to arrest this situation, South Africa would eventually be plunged into a race war out of which a negotiated peaceful settlement was unlikely if not impossible. After Sharpeville, Driver, editor of *Varsity*, wrote thus of his concern for the country's deteriorating race relations: 'There is so little time left; perhaps we should abandon social evolution in favour of something more direct'.³ On the eve of the May 1961 national convention stayaway, UCT's Radical Society, established by NUSAS executive member and future ARM operative, Alan Brooks,⁴ commended the stayaway organisers for their continuing 'dedication' to non-violent change but warned that time was running out.⁵ While echoing the Radical Society's sentiments, Mike Wade, editor of *Wits Student* and another future ARM recruit, went further by arguing that 'Non-Whites' were justified in turning to violence against a 'minority dictatorship'.⁶ In what some interpreted as being an endorsement of violence, Adrian Leftwich condemned conventional anti-apartheid tactics and urged the LP at a gathering in Cape Town in 1961 'to break new ground'.⁷

¹ R. Vigne, *Liberals against apartheid: a history of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 1953-1968*, MacMillan and St Martin's Press, Houndsmill and New York, 1997, p. 201; M. Legassick and J. Shingler, 'South Africa', D. Emmerson (ed), *Students and politics in developing nations*, Frederick Praeger, New York, London and Washington, 1968, p. 131.

² M. Cardo, *Opening men's eyes: Peter Brown and the Liberal struggle for South Africa*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg and Cape Town, 2010, p. 175; F. Heyns, 'A prophetic voice of reason: Stephanie Kemp: her road less travelled', *Leadership*, 14.9.2011; A1931, E.M. Wentzel Papers, E. Wentzel, 'Memoir', pp. 67, 94; M. Legassick, *Towards socialist democracy*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Scottsville, 2007, pp. 1-2; M. Gunther, 'The National Committee of Liberation (NCL)/African Resistance Movement (ARM)', South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 1, 1960-1970*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004, pp. 209-211; C.J. Driver, *Patrick Duncan: South African and Pan-African*, David Philip and James Currey, Cape Town and Oxford, 2000, pp. 192-193.

³ *Varsity*, 2.6.1960 cited in F. Burrows, 'UCT, student activism and apartheid 1957-1968', BA Honours dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2003, p. 39.

⁴ A. du Toit, 'The National Committee for Liberation ("ARM"), 1960-1964: sabotage and the question of the ideological subject', MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1990, p. 44.

⁵ BC 586 T60, 'To all students at the University of Cape Town', 'Issued by the RSS on behalf of the Student Convention Committee, Rondebosch', nd., c. May 1961.

⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 13 no. 9, 26.5.1961.

⁷ M. Cardo, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-179.

Many liberals were considerably frustrated that they were unable to play a meaningful role in the liberation struggle⁸ and feared that the creation of a new South Africa might pass them by. Moreover, Leftwich and Randolph Vigne were desperate that all change should not be concentrated in 'communist' hands.⁹ They believed that the pressure on the South African government should be stepped up, for example, through SANROC. After his arrest following a Sharpeville commemoration demonstration in March 1961 - in itself a radicalising experience - Leftwich pondered new avenues of active student involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle. He believed that as the 'pressure' built up, so too proportionately would the need for leadership, organisational abilities and money. NUSAS and the general political milieu of the universities would provide the catalysts for propelling students into the struggle and fulfilling these leadership and organisational roles.¹⁰ Similar ideas would find their expression three years later at the Botha's Hill Seminar. In the meantime however, any kind of legal, non-violent political action became even more difficult following the passage of the General Law Amendment Act (Sabotage Bill) in 1962.¹¹ Shortly after their arrest during NUSAS's Sabotage Bill protest in June 1962, both Leftwich and Stephanie Kemp accepted recruitment into the ARM.¹²

Notwithstanding the obstacles to peaceful protest and change embodied in the Sabotage Act, whites, unlike their black South African counterparts, still retained a degree of freedom of association and movement. Thus, after Sharpeville, liberal whites felt the responsibility fell on them to act. John Laredo, a future ARM operative, was asked by his post-graduate friends at UNNE what he was doing politically and thus felt the moral onus to do something.¹³

The privilege and consequent guilt ensuing from having a white skin in apartheid South Africa bore down on many white liberals.¹⁴ After unthinkingly suggesting to Thami Mhlambiso that they watch a film at a whites-only cinema, Hugh Lewin never again set foot in a segregated cinema.¹⁵ Some radicals resorted to riding bicycles rather than utilising segregated public transport¹⁶ while others attempted to carve out an open world for

⁸ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie (Geffen) and Hugh (Lewin), 21.3.1961.

⁹ E. Wentzel, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

¹⁰ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Laurie (Geffen) and Hugh (Lewin), 21.3.1961.

¹¹ C.J. Driver, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

¹² F. Heyns, *op. cit.*

¹³ A. du Toit, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

¹⁴ A. Leftwich, 'I gave the names', *Granta*, Summer, 2002, p. 13.

¹⁵ H. Lewin, *Stones against the mirror: friendship in the time of the South African struggle*, Umuzi, Cape Town, 2011, pp. 59-60.

¹⁶ E. Wentzel, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

themselves, however superficial and artificial this might be.¹⁷ NUSAS was no exception, it actively pursued social integration and like SANROC attempted to organise non-racial sports events.

Not only was political and social injustice keenly felt by many liberals, but also economic inequality. In 1963 the LP controversially adopted a mildly social democratic economic programme. This did not go far enough for the radical liberals, Leftwich, for example, arguing for a planned economy under a centralised socialist state.¹⁸ Ernie Wentzel suspected that younger Liberals were disillusioned and impatient with the moderation of the LP and to retain their loyalty drew them into drawing up a new economic policy, but in vain – they had already jumped ship.¹⁹

The radicalising effect of events and developments abroad

Though anti-communist - associating communism with Soviet totalitarianism - radical liberals were drawn to debates on new currents in Marxist thought emerging from the early 'New Left'. (After the invasion of Hungary in 1956, the 'New Left' broke with the 'Old Left' and its association with Soviet communism and engaged with Marx's earlier humanist writings.) As would be expected, UCT's soon to be defunct Congress-aligned Modern World Society and Wits' Students' Fellowship Society discussed Marxism but by 1963, so too did the LP/NUSAS-aligned Radical Society.²⁰ Marxist intellectuals were few and far between at South African universities but some like Jack Simons at UCT²¹ and Baruch Hirson at Wits were influential in shaping their students' political development.²² Through Simons' influence, some students came to realise the futility of reform and the necessity of a radical transformation of society.²³

Leftwich was influenced by the American neo-Marxist, Paul Baran,²⁴ whose work on underdevelopment and dependency had particular relevance to Africa and the Third World. In 1962 Leftwich expressed his excitement that NUSAS had made a 'breakthrough' into

¹⁷ Raymond Suttner, a liberal at that time, but later a member of the underground SACP, never attended racially segregated university functions such as intervarsity. Raymond Suttner via email, 2.12.2014.

¹⁸ R. Vigne, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

¹⁹ E. Wentzel, *op. cit.*, pp. 95, 100.

²⁰ A. du Toit, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 85; M. Gunther, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

²² Hirson played a supportive role in the Students' Fellowship Society, an ideologically mixed radical grouping. See earlier chapters. B. Hirson, *Revolutions in my life*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1995, pp. 271-272.

²³ A. du Toit, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86; M. Gunther, *op. cit.*, p. 226. In Jonty Driver's novel, 'Shades of darkness', Jack Simons, thinly disguised as 'Professor Liebmann' is portrayed as a kind of intellectual guru revered by radical students. C.J. Driver, *Shades of darkness*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg and Cape Town, 2004.

²⁴ M. Gunther, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

South America by cementing relations with the national student union of Paraguay, an avowedly socialist and avowedly anti-communist organisation.²⁵ For Africa, the 1960s were 'heady' times as colonial states achieved their independence. Radical students, both black (as noted earlier) and white were inspired by Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, while Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah was the symbol of the new Africa, the champion of African liberation and Pan-Africanism and a pioneer in post-colonial socio-economic development.²⁶ Through their exposure to African issues like African Socialism debated in new journals such as the *New African* and *Africa South* as well as their attendance at Pan African conferences, Du Toit argues that radical liberals adopted a type of 'Africanised liberalism' and would refer to themselves as 'white Africans'.²⁷ This holds true for NUSAS activists too. Since 1957, NUSAS delegates had attended student Pan African conferences and as discussed in chapter eight, had, shortly after the inauguration of the OAU, adopted a policy of Pan-Africanism. Moreover, since the formation of the black African-only ASA in 1961, NUSAS was concerned at constructing an inclusive definition of an 'African' which could include a 'white African'.

Beyond the African continent, the overthrow of the Batista regime in Cuba by a small group of revolutionaries in 1959 inspired radicals the world over, particularly young people and students. South Africa was no exception. Politically conscious radical South Africans studied Che Guevara's *Guerrilla Warfare* which, surprisingly, was freely available to purchase at Stuttafords.²⁸ In Cuba, education underwent a profound transformation during the early stages of the revolution. In 1961, a year-long National Literacy Programme was launched which expanded on the earlier efforts of guerrilla revolutionaries encamped and besieged in remote rural areas during the war of liberation. Hundreds of thousands of literate Cuban volunteers, both young and old, settled temporarily in the countryside and in addition to passing on their reading and writing skills, advanced the cause of the revolution too. The newly literate in turn taught others and by the end of the year, illiteracy in Cuba was virtually obliterated.²⁹ The 1961 NUSAS congress welcomed the Cuban revolution in the sense that it opened up possibilities for free education and the extension of human rights³⁰ while the following year, Jonty Driver delivered a speech on what he 'romantically' believed were the

²⁵ BC 586 A2.1, 'Gen Sec/AL' (Adrian Leftwich) to Derek Bostock, 22.11.1962.

²⁶ M. Legassick, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-3; A. du Toit, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

²⁷ A. du Toit, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

²⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 14-15; M. Legassick, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

²⁹ M. Leiner, 'The 1961 National Cuban Literacy Campaign', R. Arno and H. Graf (eds), *National literacy campaigns: historical and comparative perspectives*, Plenum Press, New York, 1987, pp. 173-196; J. Bunck, *Fidel Castro and the quest for a revolutionary culture in Cuba*, Pennsylvania State University Press, Pittsburgh, 1994, pp. 23-27.

³⁰ BC 586 B1 Assembly Minutes 1961, pp. 68-69.

'virtues' of the post-revolutionary Cuban education system.³¹ Though Driver in retrospect does not think that the Cuban experiment directly inspired it – it had more to do with experiences at Fort Hare³² - NUSAS under his presidency embarked on a literacy campaign which bore a striking resemblance to that of Cuba's. So as to avoid alarming its conservative student membership³³ (and those at Rhodes and JCE certainly were³⁴), the programme was presented as one intended to facilitate reading and writing skills rather than the equally if not more important political literacy.³⁵ The Pilot Literacy Project was launched in a couple of areas of the rural Transkei in 1963 by Templeton Mdalana, an ANC activist and a graduate of Fort Hare. 'Each-one-teach-one' as it came to be known,³⁶ faced serious challenges. Suitable reading material was in short supply and the project had to run the gauntlet of operating outside the confines of the Department of Bantu Education. Moreover, its launch coincided with the 1963 security crackdown and Mdalana was well-known to the security police. Nonetheless, the project was able to take advantage of the Transkei elections and the large number of illiterate voters seeking reading help and presumably also political education.³⁷

Almost from its inception in 1962, NUSAS was associated with another potentially revolutionary project, Kupugani,³⁸ the brainchild of LP visionary, Neil Alcock, who left his comfortable white existence and settled in a remote Zulu-speaking village in rural Natal. Kupugani was envisaged as a 'network of not just food distribution but also of development' in every part of the country. It was intended to be democratic and participatory and enraged De Wet Nel, the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development.³⁹ Neither the Literacy Project nor Kupugani were strictly speaking charity projects. While they might have been initiated from outside by philanthropists, the recipients were intended to make these projects their own and become the drivers of these and their own development. In the early 1970s the South African Students Organisation (SASO) would also embark on a radical South American-inspired literacy programme.

Morally outraged, radical white, middle-class students in the USA were faced with similar dilemmas to their white English-speaking South African counterparts. In 1960, the African-

³¹ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS presidency (1963-4)', Unpublished memoir, p. 4.

³² Jonty Driver via email. 1.12.2014.

³³ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS presidency (1963-4)', *op. cit.*, p. 7.

³⁴ BC 586 A2.1, Derek Bostock to Jonty Driver, 9.3.1963; A2.2, Kenny Parker to Jonty Driver, 29.8.1963.

³⁵ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS presidency (1963-4)', *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

³⁶ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

³⁷ BC 586 B4.1, Templeton Mdalana to the Executive, 'Report of the NUSAS Education Officer on the initial organisation of the Pilot Literacy Campaign, July-November, 1963', 4.12.1963.

³⁸ Jonty Driver via email, 1.12.2014; J. Aitcheson, 'Neil Alcock reflection of an irresolute disciple', *Reality* vol. 15 no. 6, November 1983, www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpages?DC/renov83.3/renov83.3.pdf accessed 4.7.2015.

³⁹ J. Aitcheson, *op. cit.*

American civil rights movement replaced quiet negotiation and legalistic tactics with direct confrontation using, for example, the sit-in. In the same year, the SDS was established by radical white idealistic activists, some of whom were involved in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNVCC) organised by Southern black college students.⁴⁰ SDS was non-ideological, like NUSAS, but became convinced of the bankruptcy of liberal reform and moved towards socialism. Its influential founding document, the 1962 Port Huron Statement, advocated participatory democracy⁴¹ based on the belief that every person could achieve self-development by participating in decision-making on issues which affected their lives.⁴² During his visit to the USA in 1963, Driver discovered that white activists working within the SNVCC had begun faintly to discern a tendency towards black separatism and the exclusion of whites from SNVCC social functions. This was a problem similar to that faced by NUSAS with regard to the establishment of ASA and ASUSA and the feeling by Driver that few black students would remain much longer in the white-dominated and led NUSAS.⁴³ Although subsequent developments within the SDS and white radical US student politics had no bearing on NUSAS, the parallels between the SDS and NUSAS remain striking. With the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act which lifted segregatory Jim Crow legislation in the South, the liberal civil rights movement gave way, as already discernible in 1963, to a racially exclusive Black Power. SDS welcomed this, but to its chagrin, was informed that black activists would relieve black oppression and that whites should henceforward work within the white community to combat white racism.⁴⁴ Following this rejection, the increasingly revolutionary SDS split into a number of factions in 1969. The Revolutionary Youth Movement looked to Third World nationalist struggles as a model of socialist revolution and as 'Weatherman' turned to violence.⁴⁵ Andries du Toit has argued that ARM 'prefigured' other groups such as the Revolutionary Youth Movement which grew out of the 'moral outrage of middle class radicalism'.⁴⁶ As far as NUSAS was concerned, the Botha's Hill proposals regarding the radical restructuring and re-orientation of NUSAS (discussed later in this chapter) were a response to both the rise of ASA and Pan-Africanism and a search for a political role for those themselves who were not oppressed.

⁴⁰ W.J. Rorabaugh, 'A hard rain fell: SDS and why it failed: book review', *Journal of Social History* vol. 43 no. 1, Fall, 2009, pp. 247-249.

⁴¹ G. Bailey, 'The making of a New Left: the rise and fall of SDS', *International Socialist Review*, issue 31, September to October 2003, <http://www.isreview.org/issue/31/sds.htm>, accessed 3.10.2013.

⁴² A. Heywood, *Politics (third edition)*, Palgrave MacMillan, Houndsmill and New York, 2007, p. 79.

⁴³ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁴⁴ D. Barber, 'Leading the vanguard: white leftists school the Panthers on Black Revolution', J. Lazerow and Y. William, *In search of the Black Panther Party: new perspectives on a revolutionary moment*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2006, p. 225.

⁴⁵ G. Bailey, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶ A. du Toit, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

The radicalising influence of NUSAS's black membership

Searching for a new political role was also the consequence of the changing demographic profile of NUSAS. The return to NUSAS of UNNE in 1961 led to the injection of a strong dose of ANC and Indian Congress activism into the national union, one of the reasons for the radicalisation of NUSAS policy. On occasion, NUSAS was forced to take cognisance of the views and actions of its former affiliate, the Pius the Twelfth Catholic University College of Basutoland, for example, regarding its advocacy of an anti-republican boycott in 1961.⁴⁷ To NUSAS's chagrin, it was unsuccessful in negotiating a confederal relationship with the fiercely Africanist National Union of Basotoland Students (NUBS) which had close ties to the Basutoland Congress Party and which in turn was closely associated with South Africa's PAC. NUSAS was concerned too to win the loyalty of the new ethnic colleges and as discussed in chapter seven, took note both of a strong minority Africanist tendency at the UCON and the views of Turfloop students regarding the role of the student in society. The repressive environment at the ethnic colleges, particularly at Fort Hare, and the improbability of those student bodies ever securing legal affiliation to NUSAS, forced the national union to explore other avenues of membership and in the process ponder its restructuring. In 1963, the student body of the JIITT (renamed the Transvaal College of Education for Asiatics (TCEA) legally joined NUSAS. Even though TCEA was a state-aided institution and its student body was not as free as, for example, black students at the more liberal University of Natal, TCEA students had a radicalising effect on NUSAS and were to make tremendous personal sacrifices in the cause of the national union in the future. By far NUSAS's most militant affiliate was the Johannesburg branch of SACHED. This was led by Thabo Mbeki (until he took up a scholarship in Britain in 1962), Abel Zwane (an ANCYL activist who departed for East Germany),⁴⁸ and Mike Ngubeni, an ASA executive member who was convicted of sabotage in 1964.⁴⁹

As noted in chapter eight, the 1963 NUSAS congress continued in the radical direction of 1962, but it did not go far enough for SACHED. Following the completion of its commission of inquiry into student organisations in South Africa, SACHED intended to host a conference with the Turfloop SRC around the theme of 'The awakening Africa and the role of students' which would interrogate the means of achieving student unity, presumably outside NUSAS. Although this did pose a challenge to NUSAS regarding continuing African membership of the national union, it was SACHED's racism to which NUSAS took exception. The SACHED

⁴⁷ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1961, p. 81.

⁴⁸ 'Appendix F', South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 1, op. cit.*, no page number.

⁴⁹ G. Houston, 'The post-Rivonia ANC/SACP underground', South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 1, op. cit.*, p. 615.

report, debated angrily for seven hours, stated that SACHED regarded 'all whites...as colonialists and settlers' who would only be regarded as 'Africans' once they had 'declar[ed] their allegiance' to the black African majority.⁵⁰ Following the rejection of its report and its expunction from the assembly minutes,⁵¹ SACHED walked out of the congress, never to return.⁵² In October 1963 it disaffiliated from NUSAS on the grounds that NUSAS was 'apolitical'.⁵³ More specifically, SACHED believed that NUSAS's policy on the IUS had not gone far enough (see chapter eight) and that the 'integrity' of its 'representative' had been 'damaged' at the congress.⁵⁴ Although NUSAS was politically dissatisfied with SACHED, its action could not have failed to make some impact on NUSAS and the need to politically re-orientate the organisation.

International student forums and anti-apartheid bodies abroad: their radicalising effect

It was not only the internal NUSAS situation or the increasingly restricted environment in which NUSAS functioned in South Africa that led to its decision to interrogate its role, function, structure and tactics, but also events and circumstances abroad.

By 1963 NUSAS effectively had a second centre of power which was located overseas. Since the 1940s the national union had mandated its former officers and student leaders studying abroad to attend student conferences there on its behalf. These 'overseas representatives' became a valuable if controversial source of advice and criticism to the internal NUSAS leadership regarding policy and tactics. Overseas representatives frequently took on a political life of their own. Through their inevitable contact with the exiled ANC and participation in the AAM, they moved increasingly to the left after Sharpeville and thus presented NUSAS policy as far more radical and militant than it actually was, to the potential detriment of NUSAS in South Africa. In 1963 NUSAS vastly expanded its overseas representatives in the UK, Europe and Africa, which culminated in the establishment of a permanent UK NUSAS Committee in 1964⁵⁵ - a NUSAS in exile in the event that it was banned in South Africa. Although this was never explicitly stated, one of the UK Committee's functions was to rein in its representatives. Officially the UK committee was responsible for co-ordinating the overseas representatives, publicising and defending NUSAS, as, for example, during the Vorster attacks, distributing NUSAS newsletters and literature and

⁵⁰ *Nux*, 16.8.1963.

⁵¹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 18.

⁵² *Nux*, 16.8.1963.

⁵³ BC 586 B4.1, Jonty Driver to the Executive, 9.10.1963.

⁵⁴ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1963, p. 4.

⁵⁵ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 135; Congress Minutes 1964, p. 132; B4.1, Jonty Driver to the Executive, 9.10.1963.

liaising with foreign student unions, particularly African ones, many of which were exiled or functioning abroad.⁵⁶

One of the committee's unstated functions was maintaining the contact already initiated with the highly controversial AAM. In 1961, Martin Legassick, a UK overseas representative, convinced the NUSAS president of the necessity of NUSAS working with anti-apartheid groups abroad so as to 'build up a breach between South Africa and the West'.⁵⁷ Accordingly, it was agreed that with the help of Oliver Tambo, NUSAS would unofficially make contact with the Committee of African Organisations (CAO), one of the original initiators of the economic boycott. This would be kept secret as an association with the CAO (and presumably also with Tambo) would be bad for NUSAS's internal position and would thus not meet the approval of the SRCs.⁵⁸ A policy on sanctions would also not find favour with the SRCs although many NUSAS members wanted one.⁵⁹ Thus NUSAS became schizophrenic and very often secretive, following one line domestically and another abroad. It voted with the ISC for an economic boycott against South Africa in 1961⁶⁰ and in 1963 secretly approved the sanctions campaign of the Norwegian Union of Students.⁶¹ By March 1964, NUSAS's role in South Africa was being 'vastly exaggerated', the national union being sold abroad by some as the 'student wing of the liberatory movement'.⁶² This was the direction in which NUSAS policy was moving in early 1964. However, a number of events in Africa during 1963 and early 1964 were the catalysts for a radical reformulation of NUSAS structure and policy.

As already discussed in chapter seven, the Algerian Students' Union (UGEMA), the most powerful student body in Africa, came under communist control. Looking for an excuse to substitute its affiliation to the ISC with that of the IUS, it threatened to leave the ISC if NUSAS were to remain a member.⁶³ This led to a panicky Driver, desperate to retain NUSAS's international accreditation, putting forward a number of extremely radical solutions to this problem. Firstly, create a predominantly black delegation to the ISC composed of ASA, ASUSA and NUSAS; secondly, Africanise NUSAS's delegation to the forthcoming Pan-African Students' Conference by immediately organising an exit permit for Mdalana; thirdly, very cryptically, as it was not spelt out, 'activise NUSAS internally' and 'go into

⁵⁶ BC 586 A2.1, 'President' (Jonty Driver) to Dave Adler, 11.8.1964; B1 Congress Minutes 1963, p. 135; Congress Minutes 1964, p. 132; B4.1, Jonty Driver to the Executive, 9.10.1963.

⁵⁷ BC 586 U2, Martin Legassick to Adrian Leftwich, 26.4.1961.

⁵⁸ BC 586 U2, Adrian Leftwich to Martin Legassick, 8.5.1962.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ BC 586 A2.2, Jonty Driver to Kenny Parker, 16.4.1963.

⁶¹ BC 586 A2.1, Jonty Driver to Derek Bostock, 19.2.1963.

⁶² BC 586 A2.1, Alan Murray to Jonty Driver, 2.3.1964; Jonty Driver to Alan Murray, 1.4.1964.

⁶³ BC 586 A2.2, Jonty Driver to Kenny Parker, 28.8.1963; B4.1, Jonty Driver to the Executive, 9.10.1963.

deeper commitment'; and fourthly, change to individual membership.⁶⁴ Driver exhorted the NUSAS executive to 'fight as hard as you can', 'it may be the end of NUSAS, or the start of a new role'.⁶⁵ This was all rejected by Parker and other executive members. 'Activising' NUSAS, Parker believed, was 'romantic', 'impetuous', 'suicidal', 'impractical' and 'unthinkable'. The recent arrests and bannings at Fort Hare and UNNE demonstrated the drastic consequences of political activity. Creating an issue would result in 'a five minute wonder', 'a few days press coverage', the banning of NUSAS and personal lives shattered. Parker believed that NUSAS's limited political programme and current structure were powerful and effective forces for change and should not be altered just because of external opinion, forces and events.⁶⁶

Nonetheless, Driver's views would be aired again at the Botha's Hill Leadership Seminar in April 1964. By the end of 1963, it appeared that the international crisis had passed. Nothing came of UGEMA's threat,⁶⁷ perhaps because of the intervention of Oliver Tambo (on good terms with Legassick) whom NUSAS had decided to approach.⁶⁸ In addition, NUSAS had successfully persuaded the Preparatory Committee organising the Pan African Student Conference to adopt a non-racial definition of 'African' as the criterion for membership of its proposed new continental student structure. Vorster's attacks on NUSAS also helped project NUSAS abroad as a radical anti-apartheid organisation.

However, the bomb burst in early January 1964 in Dar es Salaam at the East, Central and Southern African Seminar hosted by the Tanganyika National Student Union and COSEC. The seminar came to be dominated by the IUS-aligned Union of Congolese Students.⁶⁹ However, there was also a strong racially exclusive Africanist element present which boded ill for NUSAS. The participants accepted that the role of the student in society was to 'articulate the aspirations of the people on the basis of objective and truthful analysis'. With regard to NUSAS however, it was argued that it could not 'represent the aspirations of the majority' of South Africans 'while it [had] a largely white membership'. It had 'no mandate from the African people and [was] therefore...paternalistic'. Moreover, it was alleged that NUSAS's 'white leadership [had] a vested interest in maintaining apartheid' as were there no apartheid, they would not be in a position of power.⁷⁰ Resolutions were prepared to the

⁶⁴ BC 586 A2.2, Jonty Driver to Kenny Parker, 28.8.1963.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ BC 586 A2.2, Kenny Parker to Jonty Driver, 29.8.1963.

⁶⁷ BC 586 A2.1, Jonty Driver to Alan Murray, 6.11.1963.

⁶⁸ BC 586 A2.2, Jonty Driver to Kenny Parker, 28.8.1963.

⁶⁹ Martin Legassick, 'Report on the East, Central and Southern African Seminar held in Dar es Salaam from 28th December, 1963 to 7th January, 1964', 24.2.1964, pp. 2-3, BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, pp. 78-79.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

effect that as NUSAS was unrepresentative, it should be barred from all regional and international forums if it did not take corrective action.

The NUSAS representative, Legassick, canvassed hard for NUSAS. In private discussions most delegates were sympathetic to the national union and wanted it to be given the chance of reforming itself so as to remain in the international movement. NUSAS's radical policy was found acceptable, but because of so much ignorance regarding South Africa, many found it impossible to believe that a white-dominated multi-racial organisation could have such a policy and such a record of anti-apartheid activity. Without offering NUSAS the possibility of reforming itself to avoid this eventuality, the final resolution banned NUSAS from all international gatherings because its 'composition hardly reflected the aspirations of the majority of people' of South Africa, its delegates were 'quite out of touch with the struggles and activities' of the majority and thus were 'not competent to speak on behalf of the majority'.⁷¹ Legassick issued a very strong statement and challenge to the seminar before following the instructions of the NUSAS head-office in Cape Town and walking out permanently.⁷² He argued that NUSAS had done more in concrete terms than any of its critics present to secure the freedom of its country and had suffered the consequences in terms of media attacks and the arrest and harassment of its leadership. He challenged anyone to produce concrete evidence that NUSAS had not played its 'correct role' in terms of principles and tactics in the 'liberation movement'. He claimed that the attacks on NUSAS were 'based on emotionalism and ignorance of the complexities of the situation in South Africa and an exclusivist concept of Pan-Africanism verging on racialism'.⁷³

The events in Dar es Salaam filtered into South Africa via inaccurate press reports. Just as Driver had warned the seminar delegates by telephone what the consequences of their actions would be, the resolution played directly into the hands of NUSAS's enemies. The crowing NP press reported sneeringly that the unpatriotic NUSAS, which had bent over backwards to be accepted by black students, had been thrown out of the seminar, while Legassick's claim, so soon after the Vorster attacks, that NUSAS had played its role in the 'liberation struggle' reinforced NUSAS's image as a subversive organisation. Compounding this was Legassick's ill-considered telephone call to the NUSAS head-office (both the office and phone line were bugged) indicating that he had approached representatives of the liberation movements in Dar es Salaam and that consequently NUSAS had the support of

⁷¹ Martin Legassick, 'Text of the resolution on representivity', BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 81.

⁷² M. Legassick, *Towards socialist democracy*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁷³ Martin Legassick, 'Text of the resolution on representivity', BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 81.

the ANC and perhaps even the PAC in this crisis.⁷⁴ However, it was to the monumental implications of the seminar's resolution that NUSAS immediately turned its attention. Restructuring NUSAS became an absolute priority. Driver drew up a paper in response to Dar es Salaam and requested Legassick and Magnus Gunther, the latter a former NUSAS vice-president who subsequently worked for COSEC in the Netherlands, to do the same. These papers were to be discussed at NUSAS's National Leadership Seminar at Botha's Hill in April 1964 and the seminar findings regarding restructuring NUSAS would then be presented to the 1964 NUSAS congress for its consideration.⁷⁵

The Botha's Hill Seminar, April 1964

The seminar was attended by a cross-section of emerging radical student leaders, black and white, both pro- and anti-NUSAS. Representatives from NUSAS's affiliated centres, its branches as well as all the ethnic universities were present⁷⁶ while the political allegiances of participants varied between the ANC, PAC, LP and the Indian Congresses. There was also at least one police spy present.⁷⁷ The highly representative nature of the gathering engendered a feeling of safety⁷⁸ while the unusually large proportion of black students imbued black participants with the confidence to speak out.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, there was unease on the part of some participants about recording in writing the highly controversial seminar discussions.⁸⁰

Though the proposals presented at this seminar were radical and controversial, they were not overly out of sync with radical liberal opinion, freely voiced in radical liberal publications and thus in the public domain. In a revealingly entitled article, 'Liberals in the revolution',⁸¹ Patrick van Rensburg, the co-originator of the 1959 overseas economic boycott and to whom the NUSAS leadership repaired in Bechuanaland to discuss the organisation's leadership training course, CADET,⁸² addressed many of the issues with which the Botha's Hill participants grappled. There was little that Liberals could do which would directly result in African freedom, Van Rensburg contended. Liberals ought to be very junior partners to Africans working towards the transfer of power to the majority and ought to accept African nationalist leadership, leaving it to Africans themselves to decide which African nationalists should lead them. Liberals should accept the goal of Pan-African unity in addition to being

⁷⁴ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 14-15.

⁷⁵ BC 586 U2, Jonty Driver to Martin (Legassick) and James (White), 17.4.1964, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁶ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, Gavin Williams via email, 26.11.2014.

⁷⁸ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

⁷⁹ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁸⁰ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

⁸¹ P. van Rensburg, 'Liberals and the revolution', *New African* vol. 2 no. 2, 20.2.1963.

⁸² C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', *op. cit.*, p. 7.

'more forthrightly socialist'. Finally, and far more controversially, Van Rensburg argued that 'only if Liberals could offer an alternative and speedy means of liberation to violence and anti-whiteism would they be justified in condemning them.'⁸³

Legassick believed that NUSAS should become the student wing of the liberation movement.⁸⁴ The restructured organisation would continue to provide leadership training but would in addition, complete tasks (unspecified) entrusted to it by the liberation movement. Legassick accepted the Dar es Salaam criticism that the leaders of NUSAS had a vested interest in apartheid and that NUSAS did not represent the aspirations of the masses. Moreover, he believed that whites controlled NUSAS and that black students holding leadership positions in NUSAS were merely tokens. He thus advocated an African-led but non-racial and socialist organisation which would represent the aspirations of the majority, enabling it to develop a genuine African socialist ideology in place of alien European ideologies like liberalism. He believed that a genuine student liberation movement could not include in its ranks the 'oppressors' thus making it imperative for NUSAS to switch to individual enrolment and in so doing, jettisoning the bulk of its white membership. It would endeavour to recruit students from both within and outside South Africa and because of the nature of some of its activities would probably have to operate in some instances as an underground organisation from outside South Africa.⁸⁵ More than forty years later, Legassick would surmise that his proposals were 'in a certain sense....a confused anticipation of the split of the South African Students' Organisation from NUSAS....in 1969'.⁸⁶ In the milieu of 1964 however, it could be argued that Legassick was proposing that NUSAS become ASA: the only real difference between the proposed restructured NUSAS and the current ASA being the non-racial composition of the former. Brickhill and Brooks have argued that ASA was a bridge between the rise of SASO and black students participating in NUSAS.⁸⁷ Legassick's and Driver's proposals also fit this description.

In his personal capacity, Driver questioned whether students in ASA and ASUSA, who were unable to forge unity among themselves, would voluntarily accede to NUSAS's request that they join an organisation established by whites. Moreover, such an organisation would still be predominantly white given the demographics of South African students.⁸⁸ He accepted

⁸³ P. van Rensburg, *op. cit.*

⁸⁴ M. Legassick, *Towards socialist democracy, op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁸⁵ Jonty Driver, 'NUSAS: A Paper by C.J. Driver delivered to N.U.S.A.S. National Seminar, 1964', BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, pp. 116-117.

⁸⁶ M. Legassick, *Towards socialist democracy, op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁸⁷ A. Brooks and J. Brickhill, *Whirlwind before the storm: the origins and development of the uprising in Soweto and the rest of South Africa from June to December 1976*, International Defence and Aid Fund, London, 1980, p. 72.

⁸⁸ Jonty Driver, 'NUSAS: A Paper' *op. cit.*, p. 119e.

the imperative of Africanising NUSAS and thus suggested that the organisation open its membership to senior high school pupils.⁸⁹ In addition to altering the racial profile of the national union, this would most certainly have radicalised it. African schools, particularly former mission institutions, remained in a permanent state of rebellion against Bantu Education, a fact not lost on ASA, which had already endeavoured to harness this militancy, as would, at the end of the decade, the Black Consciousness Movement.⁹⁰ The seminar delegates accepted this racial engineering. Driver rejected the idea that an ideology should be discarded because it was 'alien', arguing that much of African Socialism and nationalism were based on Marxism, but believed that the test should be pragmatism and the ideology's suitability for the conditions and context.⁹¹

In what was a distinct departure from the past and demonstrated the influence of Pan-Africanism, Driver formulated a new definition and understanding of non-racialism and African leadership. In the past, he explained, NUSAS's attitude had been to 'disregard a man's [sic] race and judge him [sic] on merit alone'. However as everything in South Africa was determined by race, it was impossible to judge someone on merit alone and thus 'those who are the most oppressed must therefore lead the liberation movement'.⁹² Similar views of black leadership and a non-racial definition of 'black' would be espoused by the Black Consciousness Movement some years later. To Driver, 'African leadership' did not imply that NUSAS should order black students to lead them – in other words, whites would remain in charge – but rather that white students should say to black students: 'if you want to lead us, we will follow you'.⁹³ For this Driver was 'heavily criticised'. African students in particular accused him of 'thinking through....[his] skin and not with [his] mind'.⁹⁴

Driver concurred with Legassick and Gunther that NUSAS's core function was the identification and training of leaders⁹⁵ who after university would 'continue working through other organisations towards the same ends' as NUSAS. NUSAS, Driver believed, had a 'radical role' as 'an active agent for change in South Africa' which included working towards the 'unity' of the 'liberation movement'.⁹⁶ 'Liberation movement' was defined inclusively as organisations, both legal and illegal, working towards democracy.⁹⁷ Unification would be undertaken by providing the framework for those with differing political viewpoints to co-

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 119h, 119i.

⁹⁰ A. Brooks and J. Brickhill, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

⁹¹ Jonty Driver, 'NUSAS: A Paper', *op. cit.*, pp. 119f, 119g.

⁹² *ibid.*, p. 119h.

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 12, 4.6.1964.

⁹⁵ Jonty Driver, 'NUSAS: A Paper', *op. cit.*, pp. 118, 119b.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 119b.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 113.

operate together in one organisation. It would pursue its radical role through its 'public activities' and 'private activities', the former including the provision of loans and scholarships⁹⁸ and the latter comprising SACHED, CADET, the Literacy Project, the Political Freedom Fund and the Prison Education Scheme.⁹⁹ NUSAS's minor functions entailed providing student benefits to its well-off, predominantly white membership and in so doing, educating white students by projecting NUSAS's ideas. Left wing critics believed that the political education of white students was a waste of time, but Driver disagreed. He accepted that it would not bring about change in South Africa, but it would prepare and neutralise the potentially dangerous white minority for life under an inevitable and future black majority government. The other minor functions of NUSAS included offering practical experience of non-racialism and providing a vehicle for protest. Like other radicals, Driver was convinced of the inefficacy of protests, demonstrations and petitions as a means of securing change but argued that protest activity 'activated' the NUSAS leadership and its membership and thus provided an opportunity for student education and leadership training.¹⁰⁰

Driver argued that NUSAS was a dynamic and evolving organisation. For example, its policy-driving 'power base' had shifted from UCT and Wits to Fort Hare, UNNE and Pietermaritzburg¹⁰¹ (not explained). As NUSAS policy radicalised and South Africa became more oppressive and more whites withdrew into the *laager*, so too did conservative white students who responded by withdrawing from NUSAS. In the future, when a centre displayed conservative tendencies, individual enrolment would replace automatic affiliation. Thus incrementally, a smaller, more committed NUSAS would come into being.¹⁰² However, Driver, Gunther and the seminar rejected Legassick's suggestion that NUSAS immediately jettison automatic affiliation¹⁰³ as this would appear to be capitulation to Vorster and would, more seriously, sever the tie between NUSAS and the SRCs and student bodies, thus endangering its leadership training role and threatening its financial base.¹⁰⁴

The seminar not only interrogated the future role and structure of NUSAS but also the role of the university in society, imperialism and colonialism, African post-colonial development, African Socialism and Pan-Africanism.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 119b.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 119c.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 119c, 119d.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 112.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p. 119f.

¹⁰³ 'Communique of Seminar', BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 133.

¹⁰⁴ Jonty Driver, 'NUSAS: A Paper', *op. cit.*, pp. 119, 119f.

Moving away from the liberal view of the role of the university and education, the seminar averred that African universities should reflect the social, political and economic values of the societies in which they were situated. Moreover, their primary goal ought to be the training of informed leaders, conscious of the peculiar needs of their societies. Universities ought to be involved in nation building as well as the development of a curriculum responsive to African needs. Evidently influenced by the SDS's Port Huron Statement, the seminar believed that the changes required to make curricula relevant to post-colonial African societies could be undertaken by students themselves through their participation in academic and administrative university structures. In what would otherwise have amounted to a fundamental break with NUSAS's understanding of academic freedom and university autonomy, the seminar narrowly rejected the proposition that the state, representing the aspirations of the people could effect these changes from above.¹⁰⁵

As far as the political economy of newly independent African states was concerned, the seminar envisaged strong, centralised, socialist governments which would drive rapid industrialisation so as to reverse underdevelopment and provide the basic needs of society. In what amounted to an approval of African Socialism, the seminar recognised the enabling role that African communalism could play in the development of a socialist state.¹⁰⁶ Demonstrating the influence of new writing on underdevelopment, the seminar expanded NUSAS's policy on colonialism and imperialism by rejecting neo-colonialism too.¹⁰⁷ No unanimity could be reached on the policy of Africanisation which was implicit in Pan-Africanism. The majority believed that it was unreasonable to expect that the white population accept discrimination against it which was liable to occur in the early stages of the policy's implementation.¹⁰⁸

The final public communique of the seminar recommended that NUSAS maintain its current structure and even endeavour to expand its membership if this did not compromise its principles. It should commit itself to the further development of its policy along the lines of the previous five years and in the words of the Dar es Salaam seminar, should pledge itself to make every effort to 'articulate and realise the aspirations of the South African people'.¹⁰⁹ It believed that the Dar es Salaam resolution should be interpreted as 'constructive criticism' rather than a destructive ultimatum and rationalised that by NUSAS's commitment to

¹⁰⁵ 'Report of the NUSAS National Seminar 1964', BC 586 B1 Presidential Report, 1964, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 4, 15.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁹ 'Communique of Seminar', BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1964, p. 133.

achieving a democratic education in a democratic South Africa, the national union's composition and leadership would eventually reflect the demographics of the country.¹¹⁰

Even though the seminar did not accept Legassick's proposals to restructure NUSAS as an exiled overtly political extension of the banned liberation movements, (though some aligned to the ANC did¹¹¹) the seminar's conclusions, if they were accepted by the student assembly, would commit NUSAS to pursuing fundamental change in South Africa, and within the context of the wide terms of reference of the Suppression of Communism and the General Law Amendment Acts, could even be construed as subversive. In expressing the opinion that one of the dual major functions of NUSAS should be 'working towards unity among all forces working for democracy',¹¹² it was quite clear that the participants at the seminar believed that NUSAS should be aligned to the African nationalist liberation movement and with the seminar's expressed commitment to non-racialism, whether it was reformulated or not, to what had earlier been identified as the non-ideological, non-communist wing of the ANC. The seminar's commitment to socialism and, for example, nationalisation, was for 'practical purposes' rather than an 'ideological' commitment to Marxism, similar to the early ideas of the American SDS. In this way the seminar distanced itself from dialectical materialism in general and the SACP in particular.

Reaction to the Botha's Hill Seminar

According to the first reports after the conclusion of the six day seminar, it was a great success.¹¹³ Delegates described the occasion as 'highly contentious yet highly successful',¹¹⁴ 'exhilarating',¹¹⁵ 'impressive', 'exciting', 'valuable', 'stimulating' and 'an experience of great importance'¹¹⁶ at which students of all colours could take part in 'serious and committed political discussion'.¹¹⁷ Because the NUSAS executive realised that Driver's paper on the future role of the student movement was highly controversial and could be misused if it fell into the wrong hands, participants were expected to return the numbered copies at the conclusion of the session. However, two were not returned. One was smuggled out by a student at Natal Training College, and, as mentioned in chapter eight, landed up in the possession of Aubrey Levine. Very soon, it was clear that the security police, the vice-president of the Durban SRC who had resigned from NUSAS, and the Afrikaans press had

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 132.

¹¹¹ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

¹¹² 'Communique of Seminar', *op. cit.*, p. 133.

¹¹³ BC 586 A2.2, Maeder Osler to Ros (Traub), 4.5.1964.

¹¹⁴ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 9, 13.5.1964.

¹¹⁵ Gavin Williams via email, 26.11.2014.

¹¹⁶ *Nux* no. 4, 22.5.1964.

¹¹⁷ Gavin Williams via email, 26.11.2014.

copies too, *Die Transvaler* publishing extracts of the speech.¹¹⁸ As noted in chapter eight, Driver's speech, delivered in his personal capacity, was rewritten by Levine in such a way that Legassick's views and Gunther's hypothetical future scenarios for NUSAS were presented as those of Driver in his capacity as president of NUSAS and thus NUSAS policy itself. Levine and the right wing employed Driver's operational definitions selectively. For example 'revolution' as defined by Driver as fundamental change that could be violent or non-violent was utilised to allege that NUSAS proposed violent, communist revolution. Driver's definition of 'liberation movement' (previously discussed) was ignored, Levine presenting NUSAS as a liberation movement in its generally understood meaning of being the ANC and PAC. Much was made of the 'public' and 'private' or 'secret' activities of NUSAS. Without elucidating these as Driver had done, these were elided with Legassick's subversive scenario of NUSAS operating as a public front in South Africa while its important work went underground. To all of this, Levine added that NUSAS was the front of the ANC and received its orders from the liberation movement via its 'chief', its honorary president, Albert Luthuli.

This was perhaps the greatest crisis that NUSAS had faced since 1947-8 when all but two universities had disaffiliated. Driver's speech, though not the seminar's explosive post-colonial policy recommendations, was circulated and published in various forms by the national press as well as by the campus conservative organisations, the latter urging students to resign from NUSAS. As noted in chapter eight, the SRCs of Durban and the Natal Training College temporarily disaffiliated from NUSAS, as did conditionally, that of JCE. The UCT SRC dissociated itself from the speech¹¹⁹ and after reconsidering its initial intention of censuring Driver, severely criticised him for jeopardising NUSAS by making his very personal 'views public when his name was so closely linked with NUSAS'.¹²⁰ Likewise the Wits and Pietermaritzburg SRCs dissociated themselves from the seminar,¹²¹ the Wits SRC 'question[ing] the wisdom of the president in making statements on NUSAS in private'¹²² and Pietermaritzburg 'plac[ing] on record its extreme disapproval of the speech... [of] Jonty Driver'.¹²³ In addition, elements within the Pietermaritzburg student body unsuccessfully called for Driver's removal as NUSAS president.¹²⁴ Only the UNNE SRC

¹¹⁸ J. Driver, 'Statement by the president to the UP on the right of NUSAS officers, particularly the president to make statements in their personal capacities', BC 586 B1 Addendum to the Presidential Report 1964, pp. 153-154; B4.1, Maeder Osler to the Executive, 'For information SRC presidents only', 22.5.1964, pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁹ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 13, 10.6.1964.

¹²⁰ *ibid.* no. 14, 17.6.1964.

¹²¹ *Nux* no. 5, 4.6.1964.

¹²² BC 586 B1 1964, D. Bostock, 'Report to the 40th NUSAS Assembly, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg – July 1964', pp. 8-9.

¹²³ *Nux* no. 5, 4.6.1964.

¹²⁴ *ibid.* no. 7, 25.6.1964.

bucked the general trend. Presumably with the support of NEUM and ASUSA, the SRC hailed 'the bold and radical stand of NUSAS against all forms of apartheid' and 'the courage and determination displayed by the leadership of NUSAS'. UNNE pledged itself to 'fight tooth and nail' for the retention of Driver and 'people who think like him' if, in the face of propaganda and smear campaigns, the anticipated attempt to force Driver to resign the presidency materialised at the forthcoming congress.¹²⁵ Lawrence Gandar, the editor of the liberal *Rand Daily Mail*, also defended and lauded NUSAS and Driver. He declared that he found 'nothing outrageous' about Driver's paper and 'was delighted' that student leaders were 'capable of true radical thinking' and in the true meaning of university education were able to think independently 'beyond the familiar clichés of their time' and 'challenge... old assumptions'.¹²⁶

'Botha's Hill' provided a lucky break for the state and its allies who used this as a new weapon with which to smear NUSAS. J.J.B. van Zyl, MP for Pretoria-Sunnyside, claimed in parliament on 14 May 1964 that NUSAS was 'the Communist Party of South Africa in disguise'.¹²⁷ This was reinforced by Jaap Marais, Hertzog Group-aligned MP for Innesdal, when he alleged that 'NUSAS and the ANC are in complete agreement with each other in regard to communism, the liberation movement and revolution in South Africa'.¹²⁸ Like Vorster some months earlier, Jan de Klerk, Minister of Education, attacked the system of automatic affiliation to NUSAS and ominously for the future, threatened to withdraw the state's subsidy to the NUSAS universities.¹²⁹ Driver and Osler were summoned to parliament to be 'grilled' by the UP and a baffled Sir De Villiers Graaff. Graaff was convinced that Driver, a poet, was mad.¹³⁰ Marais Steyn warned NUSAS that it would be unable to continue defending it unless it could adequately explain its 'secret activities' and the role it envisaged playing in the liberation movement.¹³¹ Not only Steyn, but many students too, found it hard to believe that Driver's misfortunately named 'private activities' were as innocuous as a leadership training programme in the High Commission Territories and a Prison Education Scheme known to the authorities who had given NUSAS permission to administer it.

¹²⁵ BC 586 M4.1, 'Minutes of SRC, UNNE', 'Minutes of above Council held in the SRC office on Wednesday, 3rd June 1964, at 7.30 p.m.', p. 2; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 15, 24.6.1964.

¹²⁶ *Rand Daily Mail*, 27.6.1964 reproduced in *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 16, 5.8.1964.

¹²⁷ BC 586 B4.1, Maeder Osler to the Executive, 22.5.1964, p. 5; *Nux* no. 5, 4.6.1964.

¹²⁸ House of Assembly Debates, Appropriation Debate, 15.6.1964 reproduced in *Rhodeo*, 11.3.1965.

¹²⁹ BC 586 B4.1, Maeder Osler to the Executive, 22.5.1964, p. 5; *Nux* no. 5, 4.6.1964.

¹³⁰ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', *op. cit.*, p. 15.

¹³¹ BC 586 B1 Addendum to the Presidential Report 1964, pp. 145-147; *Cape Times*, 11.5.1964; *Argus*, 28.5.1964; Graeme Levin to *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 13, 10.6.1964.

Damage control and managing the 'Botha's Hill crisis'

As soon as the Botha's Hill crisis broke, NUSAS began damage control. Driver visited all the NUSAS campuses and explained his speech to the SRCs and student bodies and conducted the Botha's Hill Seminar with the individual Local Committee members.¹³² This had the effect of averting much harsher action by SRCs and student bodies, making them 'less hysterical' about 'liberation movements'.¹³³ Attesting to the success of the damage control exercise and the enduring strength of liberal ideas at Wits, even in the face of an aggressive campaign by SACSA to persuade students to resign from NUSAS, Driver received a five minute ovation in what was regarded as one of the largest mass meetings on the campus in some years.¹³⁴ The Standing Committee of SRC Presidents met in Johannesburg shortly after the crisis broke. Driver offered to resign because he had 'foolishly endangered NUSAS'.¹³⁵ However, this was not accepted, presumably because of Osler's private warning to SRCs that Driver's forced resignation, which some SRCs were working towards, would probably lose NUSAS its black membership.¹³⁶ The Standing Committee publicly reaffirmed that NUSAS was an organisation open to all points of view and did not advocate uniformity and as such valued discussion and criticism. It justified Driver's paper as one expressing personal opinions which were intended to generate academic discussion rather than craft future policy.¹³⁷ Like the Wits SRC¹³⁸ and a UCT SRC member who claimed that it 'smacked of inverted racialism',¹³⁹ the Standing Committee rejected the Africanisation of NUSAS, and publicly reaffirmed the importance of NUSAS as a non-racial organisation.¹⁴⁰

The Botha's Hill crisis and the sudden opportunistic activation or re-activation of the new campus conservative societies dragged on towards the end of the second term and into preparations for the annual NUSAS congress. From across the political spectrum, this fortieth congress was judged to be a 'crisis congress' in which the crises of the past NUSAS year, namely the Vorster and right wing attacks, the emergence of the conservative campus organisations and, most serious of all, the Botha's Hill Seminar and its consequences would be deliberated.¹⁴¹ It was generally agreed that NUSAS had reached a turning point and would split along right and left lines, with most pre-congress commentators predicting a shift

¹³² *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 12, 4.6.1964.

¹³³ BC 586 A2.2, Maeder Osler to Jonty and Ros, 5.6.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 14, 17.6.1964.

¹³⁴ BC 586 B4.1, Maeder Osler to the Executive, 22.5.1964, p. 4.

¹³⁵ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 12, 4.6.1964.

¹³⁶ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', *op. cit.*, p. 16.

¹³⁷ BC 586 B4.1, Maeder Osler to the Executive, 22.5.1964, p. 4.

¹³⁸ BC 586 B1 1964, Derek Bostock, 'Report to the 40th NUSAS Assembly, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg – July 1964', p. 8.

¹³⁹ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 14, 17.6.1964; C.J. Driver, 'Used to be friends', *Granta* 80, Winter 2002, p. 16.

¹⁴⁰ BC 586 B4.1, Maeder Osler to the Executive, 22.5.1964.

¹⁴¹ *Witwatersrand Student*, 1.6.1964.

to the right.¹⁴² The government hoped that the congress would witness the end of NUSAS while the UP hoped that the organisation would 'wipe its slate clean', particularly as far as its current leadership was concerned.¹⁴³ The Wits SRC believed the congress would be concerned at restoring 'responsibility' and 'realism' to the national union. Melvyn Drummond of the UCT CSA stated that for NUSAS's own good, Driver should be forced to resign. Drummond's own preferred scenario entailed NUSAS taking the radical route¹⁴⁴ of Driver and Legassick and presumably then splitting and in so doing, enabling the conservative campus organisations to absorb the bulk of its membership. Much of what could happen would depend on the large delegations of Wits and UCT. Until Botha's Hill, the UCT SRC was after UNNE, NUSAS's most radical full affiliate and as such had given the NUSAS executive much trouble as hinted at in the correspondence over the previous NUSAS year.¹⁴⁵ However, this changed after Botha's Hill, the UCT SRC and particularly the hitherto radically outspoken Joseph Levenstein and David de Keller, taking a strong censorious line against Driver and his carelessness. Moreover, in the wake of the conservative challenge, Levenstein was particularly keen on supplanting Driver with someone 'more malleable and less out-spoken'.¹⁴⁶ As previously noted, the Wits SRC had moved to the right in 1962 and consequently its congress delegation was 'packed with conservative Progressives' but did include a 'couple of lone radicals' as alternative delegates. As was mentioned earlier, Rhodes had a conservative 'students-as-such' mandate while Durban and JCE were threatening disaffiliation. Osler privately feared that the congress would be 'very very tough' and that the current NUSAS leadership would need 'all fighters and all supporters'.¹⁴⁷ Nonetheless, the NUSAS executive bravely spun for public consumption, that though the congress occurred at a 'difficult time in NUSAS's ...history' and would be 'a test of the conviction, commitment and cohesion of the national union', it predicted that NUSAS's basic principles based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would nevertheless be reaffirmed.¹⁴⁸

The 'crisis congress' of 1964

Leo Marquard, founder of NUSAS and doyen of South African liberalism, opened the fortieth anniversary congress of the national union. He urged NUSAS members not to 'shrink from

¹⁴² *Cape Times*, 11.7.1964; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 14, 24.7.1964; *Varisty* vol. 23 no. 16, 5.8.1964; *Rhodeo*, 6.8.1964; *Nux* no. 8, 13.8.1964.

¹⁴³ *Contact* vol. 7 no. 9, 31.7.1964.

¹⁴⁴ *Trend*, 23.6.1964.

¹⁴⁵ BC 586 A2.2, Maeder Osler to Jonty and Ros, 5.6.1964, p. 3.

¹⁴⁶ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', *op. cit.*, p. 12.

¹⁴⁷ BC 586 M4.3, Maeder Osler to Mewa Ramgobin, 29.5.1964.

¹⁴⁸ *Trend*, 23.6.1964.

politics'.¹⁴⁹ As enfranchised citizens who could also serve in the military, students had the right to engage in politics and as young people as yet unencumbered by the demands of a career and a family, they had the responsibility to be idealistic and represent the views of the future. As liberal-minded people, students had principles in which they believed, 'a great cause in front of them', 'a great tradition' behind them and though liberalism might be a minority outlook, Marquard argued, quoting Thoreau, it was 'never powerless unless it conform[ed] to the majority'.¹⁵⁰

The first item on the agenda was the Botha's Hill Seminar and Driver's paper. In what was perhaps an attempt to pre-empt both the threatened action of forcing Driver to resign and a divisive discussion of the contents of his paper, UNNE and the radical Stellenbosch delegate, Gavin Williams, proposed a motion deploring the fact that the Botha's Hill Seminar had been used to smear NUSAS. The motion rejected the accusations that the seminar either determined NUSAS's policy or that Driver's paper expressed the policy of NUSAS, regretted that Driver and the NUSAS executive had not ensured that Driver's personal opinions would not be associated with NUSAS policy but nonetheless upheld the right of all NUSAS members to express their ideas about the national union and its policy.¹⁵¹ Early on in the heated four hour debate,¹⁵² a far harsher amendment censuring Driver and the executive for not accurately 'gauging the possible consequences of Driver's actions thereby irresponsibly jeopardising the functioning of NUSAS' was adopted by thirty seven votes to nineteen.¹⁵³ However, the final resolution was passed *nem con*¹⁵⁴ with UNNE, Stellenbosch and the Fort Hare proxy abstaining.¹⁵⁵

In order to ensure that there was no repeat of Botha's Hill and presumably also no repetition of the misinterpretations of policy by some SRC presidents following the Vorster attacks, NUSAS tightened up and centralised policy interpretation and public statement-making. The assembly reiterated the current position which permitted only the president and vice-presidents making public pronouncements on NUSAS¹⁵⁶ and in addition, prohibited any executive member, whether in their public or private capacity, from issuing a public statement on NUSAS which did not accord with the national union's policy.¹⁵⁷ The overseas

¹⁴⁹ *Cape Times*, 7.7.1964.

¹⁵⁰ *Trend*, 4.8.1964.

¹⁵¹ BC 586 Congress Minutes 1964, pp. 5-6.

¹⁵² *Cape Times*, 7.7.1964; *Rhodeo*, 6.8.1964.

¹⁵³ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1964, p. 7; *Cape Times*, 7.7.1964; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 14, 24.7.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 16, 5.8.1964; *Nux*, no. 8, 13.8.1964.

¹⁵⁴ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 16, 5.8.1964.

¹⁵⁵ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1964, p. 8; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 14, 24.7.1964.

¹⁵⁶ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1964, p. 10.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*; *Rhodeo*, 6.8.1964.

representatives and presumably also the former ones, were reined in too, the assembly declaring that they could 'in no way' 'determine the policy of NUSAS'.¹⁵⁸ In order to 'guide NUSAS through the [anticipated] difficult times ahead' as well as to provide continuity and stability to the executive which had a rapid turnover of leadership, NUSAS established an Advisory Board composed of leading liberals.¹⁵⁹

The recommendation of the Botha's Hill Seminar that NUSAS include senior secondary school pupils in its ranks received a lukewarm if not hostile reception. By a slim majority of only five votes, the assembly did however agree to investigate with the Advisory Board, the 'possibility and advisability' of this proposed drastic change of policy.¹⁶⁰

No mention was made of Botha's Hill's fundamental reformulation of the role of education and the concept of academic freedom even though the ISC had also recently taken a small step away from the liberal understanding of these concepts by aligning university education with development.¹⁶¹ The NUSAS assembly unanimously restated its belief that the role of university education was the 'unprejudiced pursuit of truth' which was 'far more important than the transitory aims of party-politicians or the temporary fears of electorates'¹⁶² but divided on the issue of the limits of university autonomy. In a lengthy debate which split those aligned with the PP from the radicals, UNNE, TCEA, Stellenbosch, Driver and a number of individual radicals argued that any higher education institution, whether public or private, which discriminated against anyone in its admission policies on grounds other than academic merit, violated academic freedom. In so doing it would effectively forfeit its autonomy¹⁶³ as 'any truly democratic government' upholding academic freedom would be entitled to 'interfere' with an institution's autonomy.¹⁶⁴ Far from unanimously then, the assembly adopted an amendment which excluded private institutions and restricted state interference to state-aided ones only. UNNE walked out for fifteen minutes in protest.¹⁶⁵

Generating as much dissension as university autonomy and racial admissions was the long-standing contentious 'degrees motion'. This was reintroduced in a modified form to the effect that NUSAS would continue its investigations into the standards of South African degrees but would limit this to South Africa. An amendment by Alan Murray, the NUSAS international vice-president and Levenstein of UCT, that the investigation had so far proved ineffective

¹⁵⁸ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1964, p. 153.

¹⁵⁹ BC 586 B4.1, C.J. Driver to Members of the Advisory Board and the Executive, 30.7.1964.

¹⁶⁰ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1964, p. 40; *Rhodeo*, 6.8.1964; *Nux*, 13.8.1964.

¹⁶¹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1964, pp.135-136.

¹⁶² *ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, pp. 45-48.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 46.

and should thus be abandoned, was adopted by one vote after an initial tense tie. Henceforward the NUSAS executive would merely keep a watchful eye over developments in higher education in South Africa.¹⁶⁶ Those opposing what was effectively the demise of the 'degrees motion' included Driver, UNNE, Stellenbosch and some delegates from Pietermaritzburg.¹⁶⁷ Notwithstanding this capitulation to the PP-inclined right (right-wing by NUSAS standards), NUSAS shifted further to the left when it decided, for the purposes of procuring overseas scholarships for South African students, to co-operate with the London AAM,¹⁶⁸ the organisation which many students feared might capitalise on the NUSAS degree motion and accordingly campaign for the non-accreditation of South African qualifications.

NUSAS's equally contentious decision of seeking observer status in the IUS was not abandoned despite the unrelenting anti-communist smear campaign. In an attempt to ridicule 'the communist by association' smear, it was argued that observing at IUS gatherings made NUSAS no more communist than was the USA which traded with the Peoples' Republic of China. However, the decision was effectively postponed for another year as NUSAS had to ensure through renewed negotiations that the IUS accepted its stringent conditions for taking up this status.¹⁶⁹ NUSAS moved closer to a non-aligned international policy and a less pronounced Western Cold War sectarianism when it decided not to seek full membership of the newly reconstituted ISC,¹⁷⁰ the body to which it had hitherto pledged its utmost loyalty.

The allegedly subversive 'secret' or 'private activities' of NUSAS received a thorough airing at the congress. Marquard himself expressed his dislike of secrecy but condoned the 'overcautious' actions of student leaders who had lived their entire adult lives in what he termed a 'Security Branch country'.¹⁷¹ The assembly voted to continue and expand SACHED, CADET and the Literacy Project and pledged itself to raising substantial sums of money for the Political Freedom Fund, renamed the more innocuous-sounding Student Defence and Aid Fund. With the conclusion of the 'secret activities' debate, the threatened disaffiliations of Durban and JCE which had hung like a 'sword of Damocles' over the congress, melted into nothing.¹⁷² Ian Robertson, the PP-aligned vice-president of the Durban SRC pronounced himself entirely satisfied that NUSAS was not involved in any subversive

¹⁶⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 14, 24.7.1964.

¹⁶⁷ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1964, pp. 51-52.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁶⁹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 14, 24.7.1964; *Rhodeo*, 6.8.1964.

¹⁷⁰ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1964, p. 135.

¹⁷¹ *Trend*, 4.8.1964.

¹⁷² *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 14, 24.7.1964.

activities, that the organisation was entirely open and that there was no truth in allegations that NUSAS was 'communist' or 'communist influenced'.¹⁷³

Ultimately NUSAS did not split along left and right wing lines, or, in the opinion of post-congress commentators, swing to the right. No attempt was made to unseat Albert Luthuli, who was re-elected honorary president, and replace him with Sir De Villiers Graaff. The congress reaffirmed its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in a veiled rebuke of Botha's Hill, its belief in the fundamental importance of non-racialism. Some of its earlier contentious decisions, used by the state and its proxies to break NUSAS, were modified or abandoned altogether, but balancing this out was the further though quiet radicalisation of policy and a decision to adopt a more aggressive approach to right wing attacks. The new executive was a masterpiece of ideological, regional and grievance balancing. For the first time, the preponderance of executive members from the large centres of Wits and particularly UCT was noticeably absent, power having shifted to Natal. Ten executive positions, including the presidency, vice-presidency and new deputy presidency, went to student leaders from Natal whose political orientation ranged from the PP and LP to the Natal Indian Congress and ANC. The president-elect, Osler¹⁷⁴ was believed to be more moderate than Driver, but he was certainly radical too. However, as a popular former president of the Pietermaritzburg SRC and as a South African Universities rugby player, was probably more in touch with ordinary students than his bookish, politically-driven, Cape-based predecessors, Driver and Leftwich.

Right wing societies were despondent that NUSAS had not shattered. JCE did not disaffiliate from NUSAS but remained dissatisfied with NUSAS policy regarding, for example, white co-operation even though NUSAS had partially reopened channels of communication with the ASB were the ASB to initiate contact.¹⁷⁵ Durban decided to remain in NUSAS and continue its automatic affiliation. The Durban SRC elections were a clean sweep for NUSAS, the new SRC president, Ian Robertson playing an increasingly prominent role in NUSAS affairs including becoming one of its staunchest public defenders. The Local Committee swelled in size and capacity, fifty new members joining in the new academic year.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ *Cape Times*, 16.7.1964.

¹⁷⁴ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, pp. 5-6.

¹⁷⁵ BC 586 A2.1, Dave Adler to Maeder Osler, 29.8.1964, pp. 2-3; B1 Presidential Report 1965, pp. 32-33.

¹⁷⁶ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, pp. 38-39.

NUSAS, the National Committee for Liberation and the African Resistance Movement

Though NUSAS survived its 'crisis congress', the arrests and convictions of former NUSAS officers and current student radicals on charges of sabotage threatened to utterly destroy the national union.

The National Committee of Liberation (NCL), which became the African Resistance Movement (ARM) in 1962 was a small, predominantly white, middle class, underground, anti-communist organisation broadly committed to the attainment of a democratic non-racial socialist state.¹⁷⁷ Through the perpetration of symbolic acts of sabotage against state installations, the ARM hoped to contribute to the creation of a revolutionary climate which would eventually ignite a popular revolution. The ARM was a national organisation with branches in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown. Through the use of more sophisticated technology than their black counterparts, ARM operatives toppled electricity pylons, dynamited a dam wall, blew railway signalling systems and mined a radio mask.¹⁷⁸ Their final operation in June 1964 was a defiant protest against the conviction of the high command of MK at the conclusion of the Rivonia trial.¹⁷⁹

Like MK, the ARM traced its origins to Sharpeville and the banning of the liberation movements. Three different groupings/ideological strands came together as the NCL in late 1961. A radical liberal-ex-communist grouping loosely led by John Lang coalesced in the Johannesburg Fort during the 1960 state of emergency and linked up with the African Freedom Movement, a dissident Africanist ANC grouping likewise formed in detention.¹⁸⁰

Right from the beginning, staff and students at the liberal universities and, more importantly, former and current NUSAS members were participants in ARM. John Lang's NCL made contact with the Trotskyite Socialist League under Wits physicist, Baruch Hirson, which in turn had tenuous links to a group of independent Marxist activists linked to UCT's Modern World Society, such as Hillel Ticktin, Anthony Eastwood (later convicted of ANC sabotage) and Neil Talbot.¹⁸¹ Lang's NCL and Hirson's Socialist League connected with the anti-republican Natal Separatists and what became known as the United English Speaking South Africans (UNESSA). Some of UNESSA's members were arrested in May 1961 and charged

¹⁷⁷ A. du Toit, *op. cit.*, p. 105; M. Gunther, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

¹⁷⁸ A. du Toit, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-109.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 184.

¹⁸⁰ B. Hirson, *Revolutions in my life*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1995, p. 300.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 279.

with planning a campaign of disruption or sabotage, the police having discovered a cache of explosives.¹⁸²

A few months before the UNESSA arrests, Brain Sharpe, a Natal NUSAS executive member and founder of the Anti-Republican Youth Front¹⁸³ (see chapter six) walked into the NUSAS head office in Cape Town and presented Leftwich with a beret¹⁸⁴ – the beret would become synonymous with Che Guevara and the Cuban revolution. Sharpe claimed to be on his way to Rhodesia to procure arms for his military groups (not spelt out but these were perhaps the Youth Front) in Natal and Cape Town, which with the support of the UP would defend the declaration of independence when the Natal Provincial Council voted to secede from the soon to be declared Republic. Though Colonel Arthur Martin of the (disbanded) UFP claimed that a formal agreement had been concluded between his party and the PP, UP and the 'Horticulturalists' that Douglas Mitchell would lead Natal out of the Republic,¹⁸⁵ Leftwich was not necessarily to know this and simply concluded that Sharpe was mentally unstable and a potential hazard to NUSAS.¹⁸⁶ Insanity was not necessarily considered a negative quality amongst radical liberals at that time and was the subject of Michel Foucault's 1961 study.¹⁸⁷ David Evans, a Natal ARM member who assisted NUSAS by providing accommodation for black congress delegates, averred in the *New African* in 1962 that there was a 'quality missing from the LP' – 'a dash of madness'. 'Had Castro been completely sane, he would not have taken Cuba'.¹⁸⁸ Notwithstanding Leftwich's reservations about Sharpe and his political activities and perhaps to test the veracity of his sensational claims, Leftwich requested to meet the Cape Town grouping.¹⁸⁹ Whether he did so is unknown but this grouping was probably not the Cape Town NCL branch led by LP members Vigne and former NUSAS president, Rubin. Leftwich himself was recruited into the NCL by Rubin during the final phase of the former's 1962 NUSAS presidency¹⁹⁰ and following Rubin's departure to London in 1963, assumed a leading role in the organisation both locally and

¹⁸² *ibid.*, p. 303; M. Gunther, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-217, 221, 223; A. du Toit, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-91.

¹⁸³ W.J. Stewart, 'Natal and the republican referendum', MA dissertation, University of Natal, 1990, p. 160.

¹⁸⁴ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian 'President' (Leftwich) to Hugh (Lewin) and Laurie (Geffen), 10.1.1961.

¹⁸⁵ W.J. Stewart, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

¹⁸⁶ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian 'President' (Leftwich) to Hugh (Lewin) and Laurie (Geffen), 10.1.1961.

¹⁸⁷ Michel Foucault published his *Madness and unreason: history of madness in the classical age* in 1961 in French. An English translation appeared in 1964. Foucault argued that madness was socially constructed. There was a fine line between insanity and sanity. Renaissance art depicted the mad as possessing a kind of wisdom, J. Khalfa, 'Introduction', M. Foucault, *History of madness*, Routledge, London and New York, 2006, pp. xiv-xvi; 'Spark Notes: Madness and Civilization', <http://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/madnessandcivthemes.html> accessed 26.12.2014. Moreover, Renaissance art and literature portrayed 'the mad as engaged with the reasonable while representing the mysterious forces of cosmic tragedy' 'Madness and Civilization', https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madness_and_Civilization accessed 26.12.2014.

¹⁸⁸ D. Evans, 'Direction or destination', *New African* vol. 1 no. 10, October 1962.

¹⁸⁹ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian 'President' (Leftwich) to Hugh (Lewin) and Laurie (Geffen), 10.1.1961.

¹⁹⁰ A. Leftwich, 'I gave the names', *Granta*, Summer, 2002, p. 13; A. du Toit, *op. cit.*, p. 118, 123.

nationally.¹⁹¹ The NCL/ARM 'provided an outlet for the frustration and hopelessness' Leftwich felt about conventional forms of resistance.¹⁹²

Leftwich cast his net among radical student activists who felt the same way as he did for potential recruits. His approach to Roslyn Traub, NUSAS's long-serving General Secretary and Jann Parry, an executive member, bore no fruit.¹⁹³ Driver angrily turned down Leftwich's invitation because he was still a pacifist and believed that ARM was tactically 'premature',¹⁹⁴ would jeopardise NUSAS¹⁹⁵ and given his high public profile as NUSAS president would place the sabotage body in unnecessary danger. However, Driver did, on occasion, act as a messenger for the organisation and rented a post office box for Rubin¹⁹⁶ which, unbeknown to Driver, was probably intended to receive the dynamite and plastic explosives mailed from the Witwatersrand and the UK.¹⁹⁷ While in London in 1963, Driver had a 'mysterious' discussion with Lang on what Driver worriedly realised was the means by which Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners could be rescued from Robben Island.¹⁹⁸

From the beginning, the ARM was desirous of co-operation with the liberation movements and like the Botha's Hill proposals, wished to effect unity between them.¹⁹⁹ It sensed the political (and perhaps eventually revolutionary) potential of the rural areas and so as to build up a mass movement, sought to deepen the links with rural activists already forged by LP members, Patrick Duncan and Vigne during the 1960 Pondoland Revolt and later the Transkei elections.²⁰⁰ Lang's purchase of a torpedo boat in London was intended both to assist in committing acts of sabotage as well as to offload arms on the Pondoland coast.²⁰¹ Shingler, associated with, but not a member of ARM, had already cut his teeth in liberation politics, assisting Ganyile, a leader of the Pondoland Revolt to escape to Basutoland in 1961.²⁰² Following Ganyile's kidnapping by South African agents in late 1961, a distraught Mhlambiso persuaded NUSAS to take up the plight of his former Fort Hare compatriot. To establish the facts of the case, Leftwich contacted Duncan who had visited Basutoland to

¹⁹¹ M. Brokensha and R. Knowles, *The fourth of July raids*, Simondium, Cape Town, 1965, p. 40; M. Gunther, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

¹⁹² A. Leftwich, 'I gave the names', *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁹³ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁹⁴ C.J. Driver, 'Used to be friends', *Granta 80*, Winter, 2002, pp. 7-26.

¹⁹⁵ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁹⁶ C.J. Driver, 'Used to be friends', *op. cit.*, pp. 7-26.

¹⁹⁷ M. Brokensha and R. Knowles, *op. cit.*, p. 39; M. Gunther, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

¹⁹⁸ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁹⁹ M. Gunther, *op. cit.*, pp. 216, 219, 242.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 231.

²⁰¹ A. du Toit, *op. cit.*, p. 110. The PAC also intended offloading arms along the Transkeian coast. Nana Mahomo purchased a motor torpedo boat in London for this purpose. T. Lodge, *Sharpeville, an apartheid massacre and its consequences*, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 203.

²⁰² M. Gunther, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

investigate the case²⁰³ and who, in 1962 relocated (like SACP operative and former Fort Hare ANCYL activist, Joe Matthews) to this neighbouring state. Duncan's border-sited trading stores were intended to supply the political networks (linked to the LP) which would infiltrate the Transkei.²⁰⁴

Following from the above, it could be speculated that Leftwich wished to both Africanise and 'Cubanise' ARM and it could be further surmised, this could be partially achieved by bringing the Fort Hare resistance into the sabotage body. At the NUSAS executive meeting cocktail party in December 1963, Leftwich unsuccessfully approached Mdalana and Winston Nagan, the latter the chairperson of the Fort Hare NUSAS branch. Nagan had learnt to distrust Leftwich, was not interested in any foolish and rash operations and was in any case a member of the ANC.²⁰⁵ Legassick too would play no part in ARM because it was not linked to the ANC.²⁰⁶ Nonetheless, by 1964, Leftwich had successfully recruited a number of UCT students into the Cape Town branch of ARM. These included UCT SRC member and firebrand, David de Keller, who himself tentatively approached Nagan and Gavin Williams²⁰⁷ at the controversial 1963 NUSAS congress²⁰⁸ by explaining to them how easy it would be to blow up Cape Town's Southern Suburbs railway line.²⁰⁹ Stephanie Kemp and Alan Brooks were two of De Keller's notable catches. Both Kemp and Brooks became members of the underground SACP, making them probably the only active communists in the distinctly anti-SACP ARM.²¹⁰ Committed Zionists also participated in the organisation. The ARM's medical officer was Sidney (Toffee) Katz,²¹¹ a former NUSAS international vice-president, who, during the 1956 Arab-Israeli War announced his intention of abandoning his studies to join the Israeli army.²¹²

In Johannesburg, Rosemary Wentzel, ex-wife of Ernie Wentzel, recruited Lewin, another former NUSAS international vice-president who in turn brought in both John Lloyd, a former Natal NUSAS officer and John Harris, president of SANROC and former Wits SRC member.²¹³ Rosemary Wentzel and the fiery former editor of *Wits Student*, Michael Wade,

²⁰³ BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to 'Left', (Adrian Leftwich), 5.10.1961; 15.10.1961; Adrian Leftwich to Thami (Mhlambiso), 11.10.1961; 2.11.1961.

²⁰⁴ T. Lodge, *Sharpeville, op. cit.*, p. 203.

²⁰⁵ W. Nagan, 'Truth, reconciliation and the fragility of heroic activism', *Global Jurists Advances* vol. 5 issue 1, 2005, pp. 9-10.

²⁰⁶ M. Legassick, *Towards socialist democracy, op. cit.*, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ W. Nagan, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Gavin Williams via email, 26.11.2014.

²¹⁰ C.J. Driver, 'Used to be friends', *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4, 6.

²¹¹ M. Gunther, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

²¹² BC 586 A2.3, Ernie Wentzel to John Didcott, 21.3.1956; John Didcott to Roslyn (Traub) and Ernie (Wentzel), 29.3.1956.

²¹³ H. Lewin, *op. cit.*, pp. 67, 73, 107, 130.

paid a visit to Grahamstown to provide training and raise the morale of the group there.²¹⁴ This group included Gillian Gane, NUSAS Eastern Cape secretary, who along with three other Rhodes students fled South Africa in the wake of the ARM arrests.²¹⁵ Lorna Symington, a former NUSAS Eastern Cape secretary (who like Gane had cultivated close ties with Fort Hare students), and Norman Bromberger, a radical Christian and former UCT SRC member who lectured at Rhodes's Port Elizabeth campus were part of an ARM grouping in Port Elizabeth.²¹⁶

The ARM's overseas operatives included Gunther, who attempted to transport the ARM torpedo boat to Mombasa²¹⁷ and who, with Shingler, embarked on a fund raising campaign for the organisation by unsuccessfully tapping on student groupings associated with COSEC in Europe, North America and North Africa.²¹⁸ Contact between ARM operatives in South Africa and abroad was facilitated by NUSAS business which also provided a legitimate cover for ARM activity. While attending an ISC meeting in the Netherlands on behalf of NUSAS in September 1963, Leftwich was able to meet the London Committee²¹⁹ and plan the ARM's future. In the event the organisation survived another six months.

'The fourth of July raids' and their consequences for NUSAS

'The fourth of July raids', as the ARM arrests came to be known, formed part of a general post-Rivonia sweep which aimed to obliterate 'almost as a species',²²⁰ the white left – Communist, Congress of Democrats, Liberal, Progressive and Black Sash.²²¹ Even Leo Marquard was not spared. His house was raided while he was away at the NUSAS congress.²²² Leftwich and Lewin were arrested during the course of the congress²²³ while De Keller, was seized from his bed at the congress itself.²²⁴ The shocked NUSAS assembly, together with the NCFS, embarked on a twenty four hour hunger-strike in protest against these detentions.²²⁵ Driver and others in the know, suspecting that the arrests were connected to the ARM and not wanting to link NUSAS to the sabotage grouping, prevailed

²¹⁴ A. du Toit, *op. cit.*, p. 101; M. Gunther, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

²¹⁵ *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 13, 13.8.1964; M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1964*, South African Institute of Race Relations, Cape Town, 1965, p. 77; 'Appendix C', 'Members of the NCL/ARM with occupations and code-names at the time', South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 1*, *op. cit.*, pp. 693-694.

²¹⁶ 'Appendix C', 'Members of the NCL/ARM with occupations and code-names at the time', *op. cit.*, pp. 693-694.

²¹⁷ M. Gunther, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

²¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 214, 250.

²¹⁹ A. du Toit, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

²²⁰ R.W. Johnson, *How long will South Africa survive?*, MacMillan, London, 1977, p. 20, cited by A. du Toit, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-187.

²²¹ R. Vigne, *Liberals against apartheid*, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

²²² *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 14, 24.7.1964.

²²³ *Cape Times*, 6.7.1964.

²²⁴ *Nux* no. 8, 13.8.1964.

²²⁵ *ibid.*, *Cape Times*, 9.7.1964; *Nux* no. 8, 13.8.1964.

upon the delegates not to take stronger and more ostentatious action.²²⁶ The press announced the discovery of explosives and began speculating on the possibility of new sabotage trials on the scale of the recently concluded Rivonia trial. Shortly after this, John Harris, one of the few remaining ARM operatives still at large in South Africa, violated the organisation's code of avoiding human casualties and planted a bomb on Johannesburg station, killing one woman and maiming another after the railway police deliberately ignored his telephone call warning them to clear the platform.²²⁷ Some weeks later, Driver too was arrested and detained without trial. Like the white South African public, students at NUSAS campuses were outraged by the 'station bombing' and many believed that those detained, including Driver, were guilty of sabotage and thus deserved their incarceration.

Coming so soon after Botha's Hill and with so many current and past NUSAS officers in detention, NUSAS too, was by association, also implicated in sabotage, subversion and even terrorism.²²⁸ Again the task of managing the crisis and distancing NUSAS from any hint of illegal activity devolved to Osler, the president-elect. Moreover, 'a line' which linked subversion ultimately to the consequences of apartheid had to be given to bewildered and defensive SRCs and student bodies²²⁹ who, confronted with sabotage so soon after Rivonia, were entirely out of their comfort zones²³⁰ and were issuing statements such as 'I will fight sabotage' and 'I will fight the ninety day clause'.²³¹ Like the LP,²³² which found itself in the same compromising situation as NUSAS, NUSAS, after consulting the Standing Committee of SRC Presidents,²³³ publicly stated that it would condone neither violence, terrorism, politically motivated vandalism, nor, significantly, police brutality. However, political violence and terrorism it believed, flowed from the desperation of people continually thwarted by the government to bring about change through peaceful and democratic means. Harking back to the national convention resolution of 1961, NUSAS accordingly called for a series of meetings or consultations between the leaders of all sections of the community.²³⁴

The NUSAS executive, in conjunction with the Standing Committee embarked on a tightly managed damage control exercise. In an attempt to deflect attention away from ARM and the actions of university students, NUSAS and its affiliated SRCs focussed on the General

²²⁶ C.J. Driver, 'Used to be great friends', *op. cit.*; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 16, 5.8.1964.

²²⁷ D. Beresford, *Truth is a strange fruit: a personal journey through the apartheid war*, Jacana, Johannesburg, 2010, pp. 333-334.

²²⁸ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 18, 21.8.1964.

²²⁹ BC 586 A2.1, Dave Adler to Maeder Osler, 29.8.1964.

²³⁰ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

²³¹ BC 586 A2.1, Dave Adler to Maeder Osler, 29.8.1964.

²³² R. Vigne, *Liberals against apartheid*, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

²³³ BC 586 B4.1, Maeder Osler to the Executive, 2.11.1964.

²³⁴ *Rhodeo*, 3.9.1964.

Law Amendment Act, the proven psychological dangers of detention without trial and solitary confinement, police brutality and the continuing Nazification of the state. Moreover, NUSAS decided to say little and respond only if challenged, thus avoiding appearing overly defensive. Mass protests and sometimes demonstrations were organised on the campuses to protest Driver's and other students' arrests.²³⁵ In what was a considerable coup, the usually anti-NUSAS Dr Duminy, goaded into action by a police raid on a visiting overseas academic's home, agreed to co-host with the SRC and UCT Staff Association a protest meeting at which a call was made to the government to either charge or release the detained members of the UCT community.²³⁶ For this Duminy earned the opprobrium and vilification of the NP who had hitherto regarded him as one of their allies, John Vorster alleging that the English universities harboured subversives.²³⁷ Driver's detention and NUSAS's tactics regarding ARM unexpectedly paid dividends at Durban where NUSAS's stock rose considerably. Students' natural antipathy for the police asserted itself and at a mass meeting protesting Driver's detention, Aubrey Levine was loudly howled down while on a 'hysterical rant' about the Johannesburg station bomb.²³⁸ JCE was not won over. Its SRC president had to be tactfully prevented from making a 'wishy-washy' statement on detention without trial, a measure which he personally believed was justified in some circumstances.²³⁹

After five weeks, Driver was released from prison even though the police had considered charging him (an anti-communist), under the Suppression of Communism Act. The authorities were unable to prove a link between NUSAS and ARM and revealed to Driver that they did not suspect NUSAS of being involved in any extra-legal activity.²⁴⁰ This, coupled to his relative kid glove treatment vindicated Osler's earlier publicly expressed belief that Driver's detention was intended solely to intimidate Driver and NUSAS.²⁴¹ However, the national union could not sit back. It had to prepare itself for potentially devastating revelations threatened by the upcoming ARM trials as well as raise funds for its impecunious Defence and Aid Fund which it suspected, would finance, for example, the legal costs of Lewin's defence.²⁴²

²³⁵ BC 586 A2.1, Dave Adler to Maeder Osler, 29.8.1964; B3 Executive Minutes 1964, p. 12; *Trend*, 18.8.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 18, 19.8.1964; *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 14, 20.8.1964; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 18, 21.8.1964; no. 19, 28.8.1964; *Nux* no. 9, 24.8.1964.

²³⁶ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, p. 49; *Trend*, 18.8.1964; *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 14, 20.8.1964; *Varsity*, 9.9.1964.

²³⁷ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, p. 50.

²³⁸ BC 586 A2.2, Clive Leeman to Jonty (Driver) and Maeder (Osler), 11.9.1964.

²³⁹ BC 586 A2.1, Dave Adler to Maeder Osler, 29.8.1964.

²⁴⁰ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, p. 20; C.J. Driver, 'Used to be friends', *op. cit.*, pp. 7-26.

²⁴¹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, p. 20; *Trend*, 18.8.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 18, 19.8.1964.

²⁴² BC 586 A2.1, Maeder Osler to Dave Adler, 2.10.1964; Dave Adler to Maeder Osler, 9.11.1964.

In what many believed was a surprisingly and indecently short space of time, Leftwich cracked under interrogation and not only spilt the beans on ARM, but also agreed to turn state witness against his co-conspirators in exchange for immunity from being charged with sabotage which carried a potential death sentence.²⁴³ However devastating this personal betrayal was to NUSAS members who knew him,²⁴⁴ and however damaging to morale his 'caving in' to the triumphant Security Police was,²⁴⁵ it was the evidence led in the Cape Town trial that Rubin had recruited Leftwich into the NCL while the latter was still president of NUSAS, that imperilled the integrity of NUSAS. Although NUSAS publicly distanced itself from the actions of its former officers in a new, amended 'Increase of tension and violence' statement,²⁴⁶ it was still faced with a moral and tactical dilemma. As was customary, the office of honorary life vice-president was conferred on a NUSAS president on the conclusion of his or her term of office. Osler believed that both Rubin and Leftwich should be stripped of their honorary positions for violating NUSAS's policy of non-violence – Leftwich for involving himself in ARM while still president and Rubin for his 'inexcusable' action of recruiting Leftwich while the former was still serving NUSAS. Osler believed NUSAS should safeguard itself and had a lot to lose and little to gain by retaining them.²⁴⁷ Stripping Rubin of his honorary vice-presidency when he would not have his day in court, Adler and Osler uncomfortably²⁴⁸ realised, placed NUSAS in the morally ambiguous position of violating the principle that someone was innocent until proven guilty. Moreover, Rubin was well-known and highly thought of abroad. As such, removing him could prove difficult to justify, particularly as 'overseas', presumably the NUSAS UK Committee and the overseas representatives, were opposed to any steps being taken against him. Considerably compounding the problem was the fact that the right wing at UCT was unduly interested in what action NUSAS intended taking.²⁴⁹ The UCT SRC adopted an 'Increase in tension and violence' resolution, but because it was forced to compromise with its four right wing members who included Van Zyl of the CSA, it was somewhat weaker than the NUSAS executive's statement. Van Zyl threatened to 'play....up hell...in NUSAS affairs' and proposed, unsuccessfully, that the SRC commend the actions taken by the government against 'terrorist' organisations which he alleged, through violence and the shedding of innocent blood, were fermenting social disorder to further the cause of establishing a communist state in South Africa.²⁵⁰

²⁴³ A. Leftwich, 'I gave the names', *op. cit.*, pp. 17-21.

²⁴⁴ BC 586 B1, Maeder Osler to the Student Assembly, 8.6.1965, Addendum to Presidential Report, pp. 82-83.

²⁴⁵ Gavin Williams via email, 26.11.2014.

²⁴⁶ BC 596 B3 Executive Minutes 1964, p. 13; B4.1, Maeder Osler to the Executive, 2.11.1964.

²⁴⁷ BC 586 A2.1, Maeder Osler to Dave Adler, 9.11.1964.

²⁴⁸ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

²⁴⁹ BC 586 A2.1, Maeder Osler to Dave Adler, 9.11.1964; Dave Adler to Maeder Osler, 9.11.1964.

²⁵⁰ BC 586 O5.1, UCT SRC Minutes, 17.11.1964, pp. 2-5.

Ultimately a postal motion of NUSAS SRCs ratified the executive's decision to strip Leftwich and Rubin of their honorary offices, a somewhat different decision arrived at by the LP conference which voted against the expulsion of its ARM members.²⁵¹ That a significant minority of SRC voters, including half of the new Durban SRC and the entire UNNE SRC opposed these punitive measures,²⁵² suggests that some student leaders had qualms about abrogating due process for the sake of NUSAS's public image and/or accepted the inevitability and justification of extra-legal activity. In rationalising its dissociation from the postal motion, UNNE argued that Leftwich should be deprived of his honorary position because he had betrayed his friends and followers. However, to take action against Rubin, UNNE reasoned, was unfair, because NUSAS's decision to do so was based on the evidence of the 'undisciplined' Leftwich and not Rubin himself. In a cryptic and ambiguous rebuke of NUSAS, which could be interpreted as tacit approval of the armed struggle, UNNE stated that it was 'quite possible that what history may record of men like Rubin, might be contrary to what NUSAS has already recorded'.²⁵³ In the event, Rubin voluntarily resigned from NUSAS sparing the executive the unpleasant task of removing him. However, the honorary vice-presidency issue caused a rift between NUSAS and UNNE and was perhaps one of the reasons for UNNE's later disaffiliation. Nonetheless, NUSAS survived 1964, its worst year ever, intact.

The commencement of the ARM trials in November - the end of the academic year - was fortuitous in that it prevented NUSAS's right wing student critics from rallying their forces and so sparing NUSAS from having to issue any statements and so digging itself deeper into a political, moral and tactical grave. Vigne has remarked on the striking contrast between the ARM and the Rivonia trials. In the latter case, Mandela and his fellow accused emerged as heroes,²⁵⁴ whereas the ARM trial with its images of 'broken lives', 'betrayed friendships' and 'emotional breakdown' presented a picture of complete 'ignominy'. In Du Toit's opinion, the defeat of ARM was symbolised not by the imprisonment of its operatives but rather by 'the spectacle of Leftwich betraying his friends, himself and the ideals he stood for'.²⁵⁵ Leftwich was held in very high esteem by black students,²⁵⁶ making his fall all the more tragic.²⁵⁷ Being well known to the ANC, his actions were particularly damaging to it²⁵⁸ and presumably also impacted on NUSAS's credibility with the exiled organisation. Leftwich's betrayal was

²⁵¹ R. Vigne, *Liberals against apartheid*, op. cit., p. 205.

²⁵² BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1964, p. 2.

²⁵³ BC 586 B1, M. Ramgobin, 'Report of the UNNE SRC to the NUSAS Congress, 1965', p. 3.

²⁵⁴ R. Vigne, *Liberals against apartheid*, op. cit., p. 205.

²⁵⁵ A. du Toit, op. cit., p. 201.

²⁵⁶ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', op. cit., p. 4; T. Sono, *Reflections on the origins of Black Consciousness in South Africa*, HSRC, Pretoria, 1993, p. 22.

²⁵⁷ C.J. Driver, 'NUSAS Presidency (1963-4)', op. cit., p. 4.

²⁵⁸ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

'grist to the NEUM mill',²⁵⁹ proving spectacularly what NEUM had always said about *herrenvolk* liberals: that they could not be trusted.

The prominent role played over many years by Rubin and Leftwich in NUSAS and student affairs led to many people questioning the character, integrity and genuineness of NUSAS's leadership, its membership and even policy. In what the NUSAS executive believed amounted to blackmail, Vorster offered early release from prison of all convicted ARM members whose parents could prove that their children had been led astray by 'the offspring of vipers', 'the last four presidents of NUSAS'.²⁶⁰ University administrations, even the usually sympathetic Wits authorities, were 'devastated' by the ARM trial revelations and appalled too that students (and staff) should have used the universities as a base and cloak from which to indulge in criminal activities - activities which, in their opinion, could only play into the hands of the government and the universities' enemies.²⁶¹ The Wits authorities took harsh action, firing staff members implicated in sabotage while at UCT's December graduation ceremony, J.P. Duminy, principal of UCT, launched an attack on NUSAS and warned the public to differentiate between ARM and the universities.²⁶² More worrying for NUSAS was the evidence of a co-ordinated campaign by university principals to end automatic affiliation to NUSAS on their campuses (discussed in chapter ten). Many more principals of NUSAS affiliates declined their customary invitation to serve as honorary vice-presidents of the national union,²⁶³ while the slow repair of the relationship with E.G. Malherbe of Natal, damaged by the 'degree motion', again soured with the events of 1964. He again refused an honorary vice-presidency and more seriously, a position on the NUSAS Advisory Board,²⁶⁴ a body that NUSAS had great need of in the anticipated difficult times ahead.

Osler suspected that the new year would bring fresh attacks on NUSAS from which the national union would not emerge unscathed. NUSAS could deflect these attacks, destroy its enemies and inspire its friends, Osler believed, if all NUSAS officers and, by extension, all NUSAS student bodies, became fully conversant in NUSAS's and South Africa's history and the reasons why people resorted to extra-legal activity. To safeguard the organisation, executive members who felt that their personal political activities could endanger NUSAS, were requested to resign their office.²⁶⁵ Accordingly too, Rubin was not asked to attend

²⁵⁹ BC 586 M4.1, Mewa Ramgobin, 'Matters concerning UNNE and issued [sic] related to NUSAS for consideration at Executive meeting of NUSAS, December 1964', 10.12.1964.

²⁶⁰ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, pp. 22-23; *Contact*, 27.11.1964.

²⁶¹ Fiona Burrows, 'UCT student activism and apartheid, 1957-1968', BA Honours dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2003, p. 47.

²⁶² BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, p. 22.

²⁶³ *ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

²⁶⁴ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1964, pp. 2-3.

²⁶⁵ BC 586 B4.1, Maeder Osler to the Executive, 26.1.1965.

Zambia's independence celebrations on NUSAS's behalf, nor was Gunther retained as an overseas representative.²⁶⁶ Presumably in the event of its proscription, NUSAS made provision for its dissolution and the redistribution of its assets,²⁶⁷ urged the strengthening of regional committees 'in the event of disruption in Cape Town'²⁶⁸ (the NUSAS head office) and cryptically, found a place of safekeeping.

The feared banning of NUSAS seemed to inch inexorably closer when the Minister of Justice proscribed 'listed communists' from teaching at state-aided institutions like universities because, he alleged, they indoctrinated and misled students. Those affected were Professor Jack Simons of the Department of Comparative African Government and Law at UCT and Professor Eddie Roux of the Wits Botany Department (expelled earlier from the CPSA),²⁶⁹ who were banned under the Suppression of Communism Act in December 1964. Many students suspected that Van Zyl had something to do with these developments. Simons's course, religiously attended by Van Zyl, was the only subject the CSA leader managed to pass in 1964. Protests against these intended measures were immediately launched by students and staff at UCT, Wits and Natal in late 1964.²⁷⁰ At UCT these were almost immediately nipped in the bud by the UCT authorities who, with their Wits counterparts, attempted to persuade Vorster to rescind these decisions arguing that contrary to what the minister alleged, Roux and Simons did not air their personal political beliefs in class. In this endeavour they failed, leaving the way clear for student action in 1965.²⁷¹ Osler felt strongly that all campuses should mount some kind of protest and that these could be used to gauge student opinion and the strength of NUSAS's support in the wake of the events of 1964.²⁷² Conservatives, liberals and radicals united behind these political persecutions and new violations of academic freedom²⁷³ with one and two thousand-strong mass meetings assembling at UCT and Wits respectively.²⁷⁴ The strength of this anti-government protest was one of the reasons prompting the staging of a five thousand-strong anti-communist and 'academic freedom' march by the Pretoria University branch of the ASB in April 1965.²⁷⁵

The right-wing, as Osler predicted, resumed its offensive against NUSAS in 1965. The CSA at UCT produced a recruitment pamphlet which listed *inter alia* all the former NUSAS officers

²⁶⁶ BC 586 A2.1, Maeder Osler to Dave Adler, 5.9.1964.

²⁶⁷ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1964, p. 3.

²⁶⁸ BC 586 B4.1, Maeder Osler to the Executive, 26.1.1965.

²⁶⁹ B. Hirson, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

²⁷⁰ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, p. 49; *Nux* no. 11, 24.9.1964.

²⁷¹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 21, 11.9.1964; *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 22, 16.9.1964; vol. 24 no. 1, 10.3.1965.

²⁷² BC 586 A2.1, Maeder Osler to Dave Adler, 4.3.1965, p. 4.

²⁷³ *Varsity* vol. 23 no. 22, 16.9.1964; vol. 24 no. 6, 14.4.1965.

²⁷⁴ *Nux* no. 2, 29.3.1965; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 8, 9.4.1965; *Rhodeo* vol. 19 no. 7, 29.4.1965.

²⁷⁵ *Rhodeo* vol. 19 no. 7, 29.4.1965.

arrested or implicated in sabotage and again misquoted Driver's Botha's Hill speech.²⁷⁶ A forged NUSAS pamphlet purportedly issued by Margaret Marshall, chairperson of the Wits Local Committee, but believed to be the work of Johannesburg Nationalists, appeared on the campus in April 1965. It outlined the 'projects' the Local Committee was allegedly coordinating which included the rehabilitation of Mau Mau prisoners, securing 'clean' living conditions for Winnie Mandela, the wife of jailed ANC leader, Nelson Mandela, providing financial assistance to the dependents of PAC-Poqo prisoners, securing the release of all political prisoners, facilitating an economic, cultural and sports boycott of South Africa and unveiling a John Harris Memorial Fund for the ARM member recently hanged in Pretoria. These were discussed in *Die Transvaler* as fact. NUSAS indignantly dismissed the contents of this forgery,²⁷⁷ but except for the more absurd suggestion regarding the Mau Mau, many of these projects were quite plausible and consistent with NUSAS's radical policy and were to a lesser extent activities similar to those in which NUSAS was in any case involved. This was the dilemma and challenge for NUSAS at the end of 1964. It had sought to redefine, reorientate and restructure itself and its policy, but in vain. Maeder Osler expressed the 'frustration' and 'despair' of NUSAS activists when he stated in early 1965 that 'we all feel the vacuity of the situation we are in and the difficulty of our direction'.²⁷⁸ The following years would prove to be even more difficult for NUSAS. In the face of concerted attacks against it by the state and the university authorities, NUSAS would need to do all in its power to maintain and consolidate its present policy and membership and would thus have little space in which to develop further its 'radical role'.

Conclusion

The failure of the campaign against university apartheid, the authoritarian post-Sharpeville political environment, the interaction with radical black students, black separatism and shifting international dynamics all posed challenges to NUSAS. Thus the Botha's Hill seminar interrogated NUSAS's aims, structure and functioning and committed the organisation to a 'radical role'. More importantly, and in some ways prefiguring SASO, NUSAS grappled with the almost impossible: marrying African leadership in a predominantly white organisation with non-racialism. Ultimately NUSAS committed itself to incremental Africanisation of its leadership and membership and the retention of its colour-blind understanding of non-racialism, there being too much opposition to 'non-racialism in an

²⁷⁶ BC 586 S9, 'C.S.A. Fact Sheet', 26.2.1965.

²⁷⁷ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, p. 24; Alan Murray, 'Report to the 41st Congress of the National Union of South African Students, University of Cape Town, July 1965', pp. 3-4; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 9, 30.4.1965; *Rhodeo* vol. 19 no. 8, 6.5.1965; *Trend*, 27.5.1965; *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 7, 28.4.1965.

²⁷⁸ BC 586 B4.1, Maeder Osler to the Executive, 26.1.1965, pp. 1-2.

African context'. Facing similar challenges to NUSAS, and driven by the desire, like NUSAS's radical leadership, to play a meaningful role in the struggle for liberation, some students and current and former NUSAS officers concluded that extra-legal methods were the only means of effecting this. The close association of many ARM members with the by then undeniably radical post Botha's Hill NUSAS was almost fatal to NUSAS, already under siege from the state and its right wing allies, the conservative student associations. NUSAS survived 1964, the worst year of its forty year existence, structurally intact but severely dented and lacking in direction.

CHAPTER TEN

Academic freedom, segregation and the consequences of adaptation for survival, 1965-1970

Introduction

NUSAS survived the ARM trials and Botha's Hill by tight management of the two crises as well as by the adoption of a progressively more 'students-as-such' orientation. The latter provided the national union with the requisite space to continue functioning in the ever more oppressive environment which was unfolding during the second half of the 1960s. NUSAS was faced with new external threats to its existence. Legislation regarding social segregation had the potential of mortally wounding NUSAS and other multi-racial political parties, organisations and institutions. Through its proxies, the conservative students' societies and later by co-opting the cowed university authorities, the state continued its campaign aimed at severing the still radical NUSAS leadership from its mass student base. Shortly before the arrival in South Africa of United States senator, Robert Kennedy, the keynote speaker at NUSAS's high profile Day of Affirmation of Academic and Human Freedom, the 1966 NUSAS president, Ian Robertson, was issued with a banning order. This punitive action marked the onset of a whole series of restrictive measures imposed on NUSAS officers which were intended to weaken the national union. In the face of this onslaught, NUSAS attempted to expand its membership. It exploited the growing ideological cleavages within the NP in an effort to establish NUSAS branches on the ASB-controlled campuses. At the same time, NUSAS's prospects of securing greater participation of black South African students in its forums appeared more positive than in the past. The student body at the UCON voted to join NUSAS after abandoning its bid to affiliate with the Africanist-inclined ASUSA. Fort Hare students, goaded out of their fear and apathy of the previous few years by the introduction of even harsher measures of control at the college, embarked on mass protest action against the university authorities and called on NUSAS and its affiliated student bodies for assistance. Students at the affiliated NUSAS campuses engaged in protest action against further inroads into academic freedom. This militant protest action inspired, like at Fort Hare, by the 1968 student revolts in the USA and Europe, masked the growing conservatism of NUSAS. This was marked by a shift in policy and emphasis, from a proactive search for a meaningful role for students in the struggle against apartheid, to a reactive defence of the abrogation of liberal freedoms, particularly at the universities. This, coupled to NUSAS's inability and/or reluctance to circumvent the almost all-pervading social segregatory measures, as well as the almost insurmountable obstacles to ethnic college participation in NUSAS, led to the establishment of the SASO - an exclusively black student

organisation initially envisioned as a black caucus within NUSAS. Although NUSAS was devastated by what amounted to its rejection by black students, and though much of NUSAS's liberal activist core refused to recognise SASO and the need for the existence of such a body, nonetheless the relationship between certain NUSAS and SASO leaders was initially cordial and friendly. By assisting in its restructuring, some within SASO actively ensured that NUSAS would not fall into the hands of conservatives wishing to transform it into a non-political vehicle for essentially white student co-operation.

Statutory social segregation, automatic affiliation to NUSAS and conservative campus societies

During the first part of 1965, serious rumours of the introduction of an Improper Political Interference Bill surfaced, which, though aimed primarily at thwarting the multi-racial PP's participation in the forthcoming separate coloured elections, was believed to be applicable also to non-racial bodies like the LP, NUSAS, the Black Sash, and the SAIRR. This legislation was only introduced in parliament in 1966, but in January 1965, Proclamation 26 was issued banning racially mixed audiences at sports functions, places of entertainment and even churches. This had an immediate impact on student activities at universities and in addition Osler believed it could affect the 1965 NUSAS congress.¹ Despite strong protest action by Rhodes students² and attempts by the Rhodes university authorities to have the university exempted from the application of Proclamation 26, Africans were banned from spectating at university rugby matches,³ rag was limited to the white Grahamstown public⁴ and the NUSAS Local Committee's African choir concert had to be abandoned.⁵

The whole question of student bodies' and SRCs' method of affiliation to NUSAS remained an issue. In 1965 NUSAS followed the Wits SRC's example and replaced automatic affiliation with centre affiliation.⁶ This meant that SRCs would henceforward join NUSAS on behalf of their student bodies in the same manner as they would, for example, affiliate to the SAIRR. Thus students as individuals would no longer be members of NUSAS. This had the effect of removing the anomaly of people resigning from NUSAS, but as members of their SRCs still attending NUSAS congress and making policy for the national union.⁷ Predictably, this new method of affiliation did not satisfy university authorities who, compelled by the

¹ BC 586 B4.1, Maeder Osler to the Executive, 26.1.1965, p. 3.

² *Rhodeo* vol. 19 no. 8, 6.5.1965; no. 10, 20.5.1965; no. 11, 27.5.1965; E. Webster, 'Rebels with a cause of their own: a personal reflection on my student years at Rhodes University, 1961-1965', *African Sociological Review* vol. 9 no. 1, 2005, p. 155.

³ *Rhodeo* vol. 19 no. 8, 6.5.1965; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 13, 4.6.1965.

⁴ *Rhodeo* vol. 19 no. 8, 6.5.1965 *Varsity* vol. 20 no. 9, 12.5.1965.

⁵ *Nux* no. 5, 1.6.1965.

⁶ BC 586 B1, E. Webster, 'Rhodes University: Chairman's Report to Congress, July 1965', p. 3; *Nux* no. 8, September 1965.

⁷ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes, 1964, pp. 13-14.

state and right wing student organisations, were anxious also to sever NUSAS from the SRCs and its student and financial base. In this regard, Osler believed, university authorities were conducting a very co-ordinated campaign in favour of individual enrolment. When Durban decided to remain in NUSAS, Malherbe without success urged the SRC to switch to individual enrolment and even offered the facilities of the university administration to expedite this.⁸ The Natal authorities also investigated the constitution of the UNNE SRC to establish whether its automatic affiliation to NUSAS was legal.⁹ Duminy of UCT was more forthright. As mentioned in chapter nine, he made a negative observation about NUSAS at the UCT graduation ceremony in December 1964¹⁰ and in March 1965 explicitly called for the introduction of individual enrolment. This coincided with the announcement by Gert van Zyl that he would go to court to stop the UCT Council from paying UCT's affiliation fees to NUSAS because he claimed the affiliation was *ultra vires*.¹¹ Van Zyl's action, which continued in a long drawn out correspondence over the next few years between the university and Van Zyl's lawyers, Lombard and Truter¹² (a legal firm with *Broederbond* members in the Groote Kerk Building in Cape Town),¹³ probably marked the onset of the *Broederbond's* campaign to financially cripple NUSAS.¹⁴ In late 1964, the University of the Witwatersrand Students' Association, a reincarnation of the defunct Wits SACSA, won official SRC recognition and began secretly plotting with the assistance of Anton Mostert and Aubrey Levine to renew SACSA's earlier campaign against Wits's affiliation to NUSAS.¹⁵

The University of the Witwatersrand Student Association did not seem to have ties with the openly Hertzogite Wits *Afrikaanse Studenteklub* (ASK) which was on a head-on collision course with the Wits SRC regarding the latter's political activities. After the intervention of Professor Abel Coetzee, the SRC was forced to accept that Afrikaans culture was political and thus the ASK was entitled to disseminate Hertzogite literature from the anti-Semitic Boomerang publishers on campus and host far-right anti-communist film shows too.¹⁶ As mentioned in chapter nine, a new spate of anti-NUSAS smear pamphlets appeared at Wits in 1965, some carrying the American far-right 'Congressional Record' of the aims of communism. Many suspected these were the handiwork of Johannesburg Nationalists or a

⁸ BC 586 B1 1965, 'Durban Report to Congress by Ian Robertson', pp. 1-2.

⁹ BC 586 B1 1965, M. Ramgobin, 'Report of University of Natal Non-European Section SRC to NUSAS Congress 1965', p. 3.

¹⁰ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, p. 22.

¹¹ *ibid.*; *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 1, 10.3.1965.

¹² H. Lunn, 'Hippies, radicals and the 'sounds of silence': cultural dialectics at two universities, 1966-1976', PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu Natal, 2010, p. 70.

¹³ I. Wilkins and H. Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaners*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1980, pp. A143, 234.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 147.

¹⁵ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1964, p. 19.

¹⁶ BC 586 B1 Alan Murray, 'Report to the 41st Congress of the National Union of South African Students, University of Cape Town, July 1965', pp. 2-3; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 4, 11.6.1965.

Pretoria Nationalist, 'Marais'¹⁷ (probably Jaap Marais, the Hertzogite MP and later leader of the *Herstigste Nasionale Party*), which could implicate the ASK too. Later smear pamphlets bore the insignia of the Joint South African Universities Right Wing Students, a paper organisation that was later revealed as a Hertzogite anti-NUSAS front.¹⁸ NUSAS did not take these anonymous attacks lying down and reported these matters to the police, ultimately fruitlessly,¹⁹ and took legal advice on suing the printers of the pamphlets.

Offensive against the ASB and exploiting divisions within ASB-affiliated student bodies

In the face of continued verbal assaults against it by the ASB, NUSAS adopted a far more aggressive approach towards the Afrikaans organisation²⁰ which it regarded as a lunatic fringe body and a front of the government.²¹ Accordingly, NUSAS decided to exploit the deepening internal divisions within the ASB and within student bodies at the Afrikaans universities brought on by the brewing *verligte-verkrampste* (enlightened-narrow) struggle and, in so doing, attempt to expand its membership onto the Afrikaans campuses. It thus put out feelers at the Universities of Pretoria, Potchefstroom and the Orange Free State.

Many Afrikaans-speaking students were disillusioned with the ASB and the antics of the far-right. At the University of Pretoria, the concerted campaign by the Hertzogite group to rid the university of theologian, Professor Ben Marais, and classicist, Professor P.V. Pistorius, was met with dismay by some Pretoria students as well as active opposition from staff and students loyal to the non-Nationalist academics.²² So too did the five thousand-strong anti-communist, anti-liberal, anti-NUSAS, anti-Catholic ASB march in Pretoria in 1965 which precipitated a counter-demonstration in a side street.²³ On the eve of the Pretoria march, Osler called on Afrikaans students to return to NUSAS. At the same time he exposed the duplicity and dangerous liaisons of the ASB's international arm. In addition to smearing NUSAS overseas, the ASB was claiming to be anti-racist so as to acquire a seat at the ISC, but was simultaneously consorting with far-right wing neo-Nazi and fascist organisations in

¹⁷ BC 586 A2.1, Maeder Osler to Margie (Marshall), 23.8.1965.

¹⁸ J.H.P. Serfontein, *Die verkrampste aanslag*, Human and Rousseau, Cape Town and Pretoria, 1970, p. 32.

¹⁹ *ibid.*; BC 586 B4.1, John Daniel to the Executive, 4.5.1966.

²⁰ *Nux*, 22.6.1965.

²¹ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

²² BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, pp. 60-61; Assembly Minutes 1965, p. 64; *Rhodeo* vol. 18 no. 16, 3.9.1964; J.H.P. Serfontein, *op. cit.*, pp. 32, 51. Pistorius called for all South Africans to either discover their essential unity or be destroyed by their differences. He was a fierce critic of the Bantustans and published to this effect in the English press and in the Black Sash journal. P.V. Pistorius, 'Bantustans – fact or fallacy', *Black Sash*, December 1963/February 1964.

²³ BC 586 A2.1, Dave Adler to Maeder Osler, 11.4.1965; B1 Presidential Report 1965, pp. 61, 67-68; *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 5, 14.4.1965.

Europe and the USA like the British National Front and the Klu Klux Klan.²⁴ The revelations regarding the Klu Kux Klan were dynamite. The American South had many parallels with South Africa. This was not lost on NUSAS which in 1964 and 1965, endorsed the campaign against desegregation in the South and noted the difficulties experienced by civil rights groups there.²⁵ In the face of sometimes violent opposition from white Southerners intent on defending the white Southern 'Christian', anti-communist way of life, African-Americans embraced increasingly militant tactics in demanding the franchise and defying racist Jim Crow segregation on public transport, private businesses and in schools and universities. In June 1964, three civil rights activists were kidnapped and murdered by the Klu Klux Klan in Mississippi.²⁶ The Klan generally operated with impunity in burning black churches and lynching and murdering African-Americans, but the fact that two of the June 1964 victims were white, raised a huge national outcry. This was one of the factors precipitating the passing in 1964 and 1965 of both the Civil Rights Act (lifting Jim Crow segregation) and the Voting Rights Act (enfranchising African-Americans of the South), hitherto vetoed by Republican and Southern senators. The Klan murders also contributed to the overwhelming defeat of Barry Goldwater, the Republican candidate (and darling of the South African far-right) in the 1964 presidential elections. The large Klan show trial, which included the indictment of a Mississippi sheriff, some policemen and a Baptist preacher, got underway in December 1964.

Support for the American right by the ASB (largely dominated by the Hertzogites) and the ASB's not unexpected opposition to the Civil Rights Movement, was well known. While the Pietermaritzburg SRC welcomed the integration of the University of Mississippi with the enrolment of its first African-American student, James Meredith, in 1962, the ASB at Pretoria University sent a telegram of support to the white racist student body²⁷ which was violently opposing this.²⁸ However, within the context of the recent events in the American South, public knowledge of the ASB's association with the Klu Klux Klan was potentially very damaging. Evidently getting wind of NUSAS's impending exposé, Paul de Beer, far-right ASB president, made an uncharacteristic overture of friendship to Maeder Osler.²⁹ The ASB's international policy received wide publicity and opprobrium in both the student and national press, including at the Afrikaans-medium universities. The ASB remained silent for some weeks until Boy Geldenhuys (later an NP MP), issued a weak justification of the

²⁴ *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 5, 7.4.1965; *Nux* no. 3, 13.4.1965; *Trend*, 13.4.1965; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 8, 9.4.1965.

²⁵ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1965, pp. 134-135.

²⁶ This is the topic of the 1984 film, *Mississippi burning*.

²⁷ M. Legassick and J. Shingler, 'South Africa', D. Emmerson, *Students and politics in developing nations*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, Washington and London, 1968, p. 121; Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

²⁸ P. Levy, *The Civil Rights Movement*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1998, p. 21.

²⁹ BC 586 A2.1, Maeder Osler to Dave Adler, 30.3.1965.

organisation's international policy to the effect that the ASB would rather co-operate with fascist organisations than the liberal and communist ones with which NUSAS consorted.³⁰

In August 1965, the student body at Stellenbosch voted by a two-thirds majority to replace automatic membership to the ASB with individual enrolment. The stunned ASB-controlled Stellenbosch SRC refused either to accept or act upon this student body directive.³¹ Three weeks later, following more than a year of spadework by NUSAS officers at Wits and former Pretoria students and with the support of Professor A. Van Selms (who resigned from the Theological Faculty of the University of Pretoria in protest against Albert Geysers's defrocking and was himself then defrocked), a NUSAS branch was established at the University of Pretoria.³² Half the branch was Afrikaans-speaking³³ although presumably a large proportion of its twenty five members were Jewish as the SRC christened the organisation 'JEWSAS' and only apologised for this anti-Semitic slur following complaints from anti-NUSAS Jewish students at the university.³⁴ Far more Pretoria students wanted to join NUSAS, including more Afrikaans-speakers, but were prevented from doing so by their parents. The political orientation of the branch is unclear, but the groundwork was laid by a member of the PP Youth³⁵ and another member was earlier assaulted by his fellow residence mates for his support of the PP.³⁶ The formation of the NUSAS branch led to a dispute between the ASB-dominated SRC and the official campus newspaper, *Die Perdeby*, regarding freedom and control of the student press. The SRC claimed that *Die Perdeby* had no right to discuss, even in the unfavourable manner in which it had done so, the formation of the NUSAS branch as it lent the branch too much publicity.³⁷ Even though the ASB had earlier challenged NUSAS to organise on the ASB-affiliated campuses, claiming that these were far more tolerant of dissenting views than their NUSAS-controlled counterparts, the Pretoria SRC, after six months of prevarication, finally refused the branch official recognition because the national union would not denounce communism, elected Albert Luthuli its honorary president, and smeared South Africa overseas.³⁸

³⁰ *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 10, 19.5.1965.

³¹ *ibid.* no. 19, 25.8.1965; *Rhodeo* vol. 19 no. 17, 2.9.1965; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 21, 3.9.1965.

³² BC 586 A2.2, Maeder Osler, 'Memo to Jonty about V.P.'s Exec. Visit to Transvaal Region', nd., c. May 1964, p. 4; B4.1, Peter Mansfield to the Executive, 'Executive Circular No. 3', 1.10.1965, p. 4; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 23, 24.9.1965; *Rhodeo* vol. 19 no. 20, 7.10.1965.

³³ *NUSAS Newsletter* no. 3, 28.2.1966.

³⁴ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1966, p. 46; *Varsity*, 30.3.1966.

³⁵ BC 586 A2.2, Maeder Osler, 'Memo to Jonty about V.P.'s Exec. Visit to Transvaal Region', nd., c. May 1964, p. 4.

³⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 23, 24.9.1965.

³⁷ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1966, pp. 46-47; *NUSAS Newsletter* no. 3, 28.2.1966, pp. 31-32.

³⁸ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 18 no. 14, 3.6.1966.

The post-ARM congress: whither NUSAS

The 1965 congress was regarded as a very important event in that support for NUSAS in the aftermath of the ARM trials would be gauged and the organisation would decide on its future direction. Many congress delegates were very concerned about NUSAS's negative public image³⁹ although commentators from both inside and outside the organisation believed that NUSAS had become more 'responsible' since its change of leadership after Botha's Hill. Policy continued in many respects along the same path as previous years, but a change in emphasis in NUSAS activities is discernible from 1965 onwards. With a mounting police state and pressure from its conservative student base as well as a feeling of foreboding that things would only get worse before they got better, NUSAS under the guidance of Osler 'attempted to formulate a policy which would commit the organisation to its principles but enable it to carry on its work in the present South African environment'.⁴⁰ In the opinion of *Contact*, a LP-inclined journal, it was most unlikely then that NUSAS would make an alliance with anti-apartheid groups as such an alliance would require of its membership more than 'lip-service'. So *Contact* concluded: if NUSAS did not move right at its 1965 congress, it certainly did not move left.⁴¹

Thus NUSAS did not abandon its attempt to acquire observer status at the IUS, but the initiative made no further progress.⁴² It continued to denounce imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism,⁴³ lent its support to the campaign for multilateral nuclear disarmament⁴⁴ and despite the hostile anti-communist environment and pressure from right wing students, refused to denounce communism.⁴⁵ Controversially, given the large number of militantly patriotic Rhodesians at South African universities, the assembly expressed by a large majority its opinion that the impending Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by Rhodesia posed a threat to peace.⁴⁶ Rhodes and JCE dissociated from the motion⁴⁷ as did, after UDI, the UCT SRC. NUSAS however, reiterated its opposition to this illegal action of the Rhodesian government.⁴⁸ NUSAS's policy on university autonomy became more radical than that of 1964, when it was accepted that a democratic state could interfere with any university's autonomy whether state-aided or private, if the university in question employed

³⁹ *Contact* vol. 8 no. 7, July 1965.

⁴⁰ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 1, 23.7.1965; *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 16, 4.8.1965.

⁴¹ *Contact* vol. 8 no. 7, July 1965.

⁴² BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1965, p. 140; *Rhodeo*, 5.8.1965.

⁴³ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1965, pp. 136-137.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 141-142.

⁴⁵ BC 586 A3.8, Peter Mansfield to James Ramsay, 31.8.1965.

⁴⁶ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1965, p. 129.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 129.

⁴⁸ *Varsity* vol. 25 no. 2, 16.3.1966.

non-academic admission criteria.⁴⁹ The assembly split over the impending cultural boycott of South Africa launched by the British AAM in association with British actors and playwrights. A motion was eventually passed urging overseas artists to allow their plays to be performed in South Africa, and 'if at all possible', in front of non-segregated audiences.⁵⁰

Reflecting a change in the emphasis of NUSAS policy, the 1965 assembly elevated NUSAS's trade union activities (demoted at Botha's Hill) to one of the three core functions of NUSAS namely, leadership training and political education. To enhance the political education of students, the Research Department was reinstated and provision made for the appointment of a full-time paid research officer who would undertake and publish research on educational matters.⁵¹ Further restructuring was accepted when it was agreed that regional directors would be vested with augmented powers and their numbers increased.⁵² This had the effect of decentralising the executive, diluting the power of what many people believed was an over-powerful top leadership, bringing on board the smaller and more conservative centres and having in place a second tier of leadership should the top leadership be banned or imprisoned. Presumably this restructuring was intended to make NUSAS more democratic and its leadership more accountable to its conservative student base thereby putting a brake on the leadership's radicalisation.

The defence and pursuit of academic freedom also received renewed prominence. In addition to its campus-based Academic Freedom Weeks initiated in the 1950s to raise awareness of impending university apartheid, NUSAS inaugurated an annual campus and National Day of Affirmation and Human Freedom in 1963.⁵³ On a given day, the NUSAS executive, the presidents of the SRCs of all its affiliated campuses, the chairpeople of the NUSAS branches and representatives of the ethnic colleges, would process into a particular university great hall, clad in academic gowns and listen to a keynote address delivered by a champion of academic and/or human freedom.⁵⁴ Speakers at local and national days of affirmation during the 1960s included: Albert Geyser;⁵⁵ Professor A. van Selms;⁵⁶ Catholic Archbishop Rupert Hurley, a human rights champion;⁵⁷ John Hamilton Russell, who had resigned from the UP in protest against his party's support for the General Law Amendment

⁴⁹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1965, pp. 31-32.

⁵⁰ *Cape Times*, 12.7.1965.

⁵¹ *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 16, 4.8.1965; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 19, 20.8.1965.

⁵² BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1965, pp. 27-28.

⁵³ *Trend*, 12.5.1964.

⁵⁴ *Nux* no. 4, 18.5.1965.

⁵⁵ *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 10, 19.5.1965.

⁵⁶ *Dome*, 14.5.1964.

⁵⁷ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 12, 24.5.1963.

Act;⁵⁸ Beyers Naudé of the Christian Institute;⁵⁹ Helen Suzman of the PP;⁶⁰ and Alan Paton of the LP. This address would be followed by those assembled rededicating themselves to working towards the re-attainment of both academic freedom lost in 1959, and the attainment of human freedom in a democratic South Africa without which, NUSAS believed, true academic freedom was not possible.⁶¹ A torch of academic freedom would then be doused, not to be relit until the universities were free again – a ‘profound’⁶² and almost religious, ritualistic occasion.

Day of Affirmation: Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy

In a bid to elevate the status of both the national and local days of affirmation, NUSAS and the campus Academic Freedom Committees, the latter composed of both students and staff, looked beyond South Africa’s borders for keynote speakers. Durban invited Willie Brandt, the mayor of West Berlin and a leading figure in the German Social Democratic Party and outspoken critic of communism and totalitarianism to deliver its Day of Affirmation address,⁶³ while Pietermaritzburg invited theologian, Martin Niemoller, president of the World Council of Churches and Nazi concentration camp survivor to deliver the E.G. Malherbe lecture.⁶⁴ The Civil Rights Movement was ‘huge’ amongst liberal South African students⁶⁵ and thus it was also to the icons of this struggle that Day of Affirmation organisers turned. In June 1965, the UCT Local NUSAS Committee embarked on a civil rights campaign.⁶⁶ Inspired by the passive resistance campaigns aimed at desegregating facilities like lunch bars in the USA, small racially mixed groups of South African students similarly patronised whites-only beaches and restaurants.⁶⁷ The UCT Academic Freedom Committee proposed that Martin Luther King Jr, an African-American theologian, founder of the civil rights organisation, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, winner of the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize and at that point leading a campaign for the desegregation of Birmingham, Alabama,⁶⁸ deliver the UCT T.B. Davie Memorial speech. The UCT principal and vice-principal effectively vetoed this decision by threatening to boycott the occasion were King to be present.⁶⁹ Despite this

⁵⁸ *Trend*, 12.5.1964; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 11, 14.5.1965.

⁵⁹ *Varsity* vol. 26 no. 13, 7.6.1967.

⁶⁰ *Trend*, 3.5.1966.

⁶¹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1965, p. 34; O1.1, ‘Minutes of SRC Meeting, Rhodes University, 17th March 1965’, p. 5; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 12, 24.5.1963.

⁶² *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 15 no. 12, 24.5.1963.

⁶³ *Dome*, 19.4.1966.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 13.10.1966.

⁶⁵ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

⁶⁶ *Trend*, 8.6.1965.

⁶⁷ Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

⁶⁸ P. Levy, *op. cit.*, pp. 15, 21.

⁶⁹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, p. 50; *Trend*, 13.4.1965; 8.6.1965; *Nux* no. 6, 22.6.1965.

drawback, the NUSAS assembly, not without dissent,⁷⁰ voted to invite King to open the 1966 NUSAS congress and Senator Robert Kennedy to deliver the 1966 National Day of Affirmation address.⁷¹ Kennedy, like King, was an inspired choice for a lecture on academic and human freedom to university students. He represented the 'younger generation of political leaders and the new ideas of youth'.⁷² As attorney-general in the presidential administration of his assassinated brother, John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy had become a civil rights champion, had sent in the troops to ensure the enrolment of James Meredith at the University of Mississippi in 1962, and was the driving force behind the pursuit and prosecution of the Klu Klux Klan members believed to be behind the June 1964 Mississippi murders.

These invitations, particularly to King, provoked a political furore. The UP, some members of the PP, as well as the anti-government press, believed that NUSAS's actions were irresponsible and provocative. Members of the government, particularly the Hertzogites, following their racist right wing American counterparts, denounced the black Nobel Peace Prize winner as a communist and a member of a large number of allegedly communist front organisations. Moreover, the ASB called on the government to take action against NUSAS.⁷³ Both King and Kennedy accepted their invitations, leaving the divided cabinet the task of deciding whether to issue them visas or not. Not surprisingly, King's visa application was turned down, presumably because the state feared the challenge posed to white domination flowing from the visit of the world renowned black civil rights activist, a man who apparently inspired even Albert Luthuli. However, Robert Kennedy, a possible future presidential candidate and in reality a moderate by South African anti-apartheid standards, posed a serious dilemma to the state. By refusing him entry, the government risked straining its relationship with its powerful Western ally and would prove South Africa's critics correct in their assertion that the Republic was a police state which suppressed all liberal and democratic rights.⁷⁴ After lengthy deliberations, the government finally permitted Kennedy's visit, provided it did not coincide and interfere with the Republic's fifth birthday celebrations in May 1966 and that there was no accompanying press team.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ The Pietermaritzburg student body condemned this invitation as did the Rhodes SRC. BC 586 B4.1, P. Mansfield to the Executive, 1.10.1965; *Rhodeo*, 5.8.1965.

⁷¹ *Cape Times*, 13.7.1965; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 15, 23.7.1965.

⁷² *Dome*, 7.3.1966.

⁷³ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1966, p. 37; B4.1, Ian Robertson to the Executive, 24.1.1966; 'Member of the Wits Delegation' to *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 15, 23.7.1965; 18.3.1966; *Daily News*, 9.9.1965.

⁷⁴ *NUSAS Newsletter* no. 4, 16.5.1966.

⁷⁵ *Trend*, 29.3.1966; 1.6.1966; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 18 no. 13, 27.5.1966.

Banning of Ian Robertson

On 11 May 1966, just a few weeks before Kennedy's expected arrival in South Africa, the government banned the president of NUSAS, Ian Robertson, under three counts of the Suppression of Communism Act.⁷⁶ This, Daniel argues, was a last ditch desperate attempt to stop Kennedy coming to South Africa. As a presidential hopeful, Kennedy could not afford, in the anti-communist milieu of the contemporary USA, to be tainted with communism by consorting with allegedly 'communist' organisations like NUSAS. However, this 'ploy' backfired spectacularly.⁷⁷ The government could not have anticipated the outraged reaction of students and the general public in both South Africa and abroad to its actions. In a rare display of unity the UP, PP and LP all condemned the banning, De Villiers Graaff worrying that it could have international repercussions.⁷⁸ With the exception of Duminy of UCT, who stated that 'sensible' and 'responsible' government officials would not take such harsh measures unless they believed they were justified, earning him even greater opprobrium than before from UCT students,⁷⁹ all the principals of NUSAS-affiliated universities spoke out against the order.⁸⁰ At an emergency meeting of the Standing Committee of SRC Presidents, it was decided that Robertson would not be replaced before the end of his term of office and plans were laid for a national and international campaign highlighting the plight of both Robertson and NUSAS, aimed at securing the lifting of the banning order. Large gatherings in the form of meetings, marches, demonstrations and torchlight vigils,⁸¹ sometimes attracting violent right-wing counter reactions as at Pietermaritzburg,⁸² took place at all NUSAS campuses. Even though black critics wryly noted that it took the banning of a white student leader to prompt mass student protest,⁸³ black students did protest too, often at great personal risk to themselves. The student body at the TCEA was banned from any further association with NUSAS and individual students were threatened with expulsion following their participation in a Robertson demonstration at Wits.⁸⁴

The nature of protest changed too, becoming Americanised and showing the influence of both the American Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War Movements. Demonstrations, often 'sit-ins', were accompanied by the strumming of guitars and the singing of folk and civil rights

⁷⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 18 no. 11, 13.5.1966.

⁷⁷ J. Daniel, 'NUSAS 1963-1973: ten years of conflict', *South African Outlook*, January 1974, p. 12.

⁷⁸ *Cape Times*, 13.5.1966; *Trend*, 16.5.1966; *Varsity* vol. 25 no. 10, 1.6.1966.

⁷⁹ *Varsity* vol. 25 no. 9, 25.5.1966; no. 10, 1.6.1966; no. 16, 10.8.1966.

⁸⁰ *Cape Times*, 27.5.1966; *Trend*, 1.6.1966; *Argus*, 6.6.1966.

⁸¹ *Argus*, 12.5.1966; 13.5.1966; *Die Burger*, 13.5.1966; 14.5.1966; 19.5.1966; 20.5.1966; 30.5.1966; *Cape Times*, 14.5.1966; 15.5.1966; 27.5.1966; *Trend*, 1.6.1966; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 18 no. 11, 13.5.1966; no. 12, 20.5.1966; no. 14, 3.6.1966.

⁸² *Die Burger*, 2.6.1966.

⁸³ *Varsity* vol. 25 no. 10, 1.6.1966.

⁸⁴ BC 586 B1 1966, M. Shill, 'Transvaal Regional Secretary 1966', p. 2; *NUSAS Newsletter* no. 1, 15.10.1966, p. 4.

songs like 'We shall overcome'.⁸⁵ Folk-singing in itself was regarded as subversive and communist in South Africa, the Pretoria SRC banning the folk singing club because it suspected it was NUSAS in disguise. South Africa's first 'teach-ins' – open-ended, participatory, action-orientated discussion groups – were staged at UCT and Durban, Helen Suzman being invited to participate in the first event.⁸⁶ These were presumably inspired by the anti-Vietnam War teach-ins originally initiated by the SDS at the University of Michigan but made famous at the University of California, Berkeley, in September 1965 during the 'Free speech protests'.

American student bodies were some of the forty seven overseas universities, student unions and student organisations which expressed their solidarity with NUSAS and Robertson and/or sent cables, telegrams and letters to Verwoerd and Vorster deriding the government's action.⁸⁷ Perhaps shocked at the intensity of the national and international reaction, unrivalled since the university apartheid campaign, Vorster agreed to meet a deputation of NUSAS leaders who pleaded with him to either charge or release Robertson. This was to no avail. However, Vorster conceded that people who were not communists (Robertson was anti-communist) could be banned under the Suppression of Communism Act and that Robertson was banned in his personal capacity and not because of his association with NUSAS.⁸⁸ In answer to questions in parliament from Suzman, Vorster justified his actions by alleging that he had had to 'prevent a second Leftwich affair'.⁸⁹ Following further parliamentary probing, it transpired that Vorster had probably not even read the intelligence briefings, flawed as they were, on which he had made his decision. Robertson's supposedly subversive visit to Bechuanaland turned out on closer inspection to be a meeting in Mafeking with Leo Marquard and British government officials to discuss CADET. He had never visited Swaziland as he was alleged to have done by Vorster, while his trip to Lesotho was for the no more subversive purpose than attending the Rembrandt Group-financed Moral Rearmament Conference.⁹⁰ That Robertson was regarded as subversive, was in the words of the UCT SRC 'absurd'. He was probably the least radical NUSAS president since the early 1950s⁹¹ and was, moreover, the first president to come from NUSAS's most conservative affiliate, Durban. In addition, he was a local chairperson of the PP Youth⁹² and continued to hold his PP, vehemently anti-communist and anti-sanctions views even after

⁸⁵ *Argus*, 12.5.1966; *Trend*, 17.5.1966; *Varsity* vol. 25 no. 10, 1.6.1966.

⁸⁶ *Argus*, 19.5.1966; *Die Burger*, 20.5.1966; *Dome*, 3.5.1966.

⁸⁷ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1966, p. 39; *Argus*, 6.6.1966.

⁸⁸ *Argus*, 26.5.1966; *Die Burger*, 26.5.1966; *Cape Times*, 26.5.1966.

⁸⁹ *House of Assembly Debates*, column 97, 3.8.1966.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, columns 97, 144-146, 3.8.1966; 175-177, 4.8.1966; 309-310, 5.8.1966.

⁹¹ M. Legassick and S. Saunders, 'Above ground activity', South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 1, 1960-1970*, Zebra Press, Johannesburg, 2004, p. 681.

⁹² *Trend*, 6.5.1967.

leaving South Africa to pursue further studies at Oxford and Harvard, the latter facilitated by Robert Kennedy.⁹³ Quite clearly then, as NUSAS and the sympathetic anti-NP press believed, Robertson's banning was a spiteful, vindictive response by the government to NUSAS's invitation to Robert Kennedy and an attempt to prevent the visit, while Vorster's parliamentary replies were quite simply a continuation of his McCarthyist smear campaign against the 'communist' NUSAS.

Vorster's and the government's actions had the opposite effect to what they had intended. Robertson's banning, coupled to Kennedy's forthcoming tour of South Africa, raised NUSAS's popularity and public profile both on and off campus and effectively dispelled its negative public image derived from the Botha's Hill and the ARM revelations. The ranks of the NUSAS Local Committees were swelled by new recruits,⁹⁴ conscientised by the sustained Robertson protests which attracted up to three thousand students at a time. This was the 'activised' university environment into which Kennedy arrived on 13 June 1966, not in any way deterred by Robertson's banning.

Ten thousand students, university staff and members of the public packed Jameson Hall and ten lecture theatres at UCT to hear Kennedy speak at NUSAS's National Day of Affirmation on 13 June 1966.⁹⁵ Kennedy praised NUSAS for its dedication to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and as a rebuke against the apartheid government's oppressive policies and banning of Robertson, declared that 'the way of opposition to communism is not to imitate its dictatorship but to enlarge the development of individual human freedoms'. He stressed that the road to equality and freedom was not easy and evidently influenced by the events at American universities like Berkeley, stated that in a revolutionary world, it was the youth who would take the lead.⁹⁶ In what became one of his most famous statements, he warned of the 'danger of futility'; 'the belief that there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills... Many of the world's great movements of thought and action have flowed from the work of a single man'.⁹⁷

In a whistle stop tour around the country, he addressed meetings at Wits and at Durban and, to the anger of the SRC, which had initially successfully blocked his coming, at Stellenbosch too.⁹⁸ To a large audience hosted by Willem van Drimmelen, the head student of Simonsig

⁹³ BC 586 A2.2, John Sprack to Margie Marshall, 18.1.1967; *Dome*, 8.3.1967.

⁹⁴ *Trend*, 14.6.1966.

⁹⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 18 no. 15, 15.6.1966.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

⁹⁸ BC 586 B1, Arnold Schoonwinkel to 'The NUSAS President', 4.5.1966; *Cape Times*, 21.3.1966; *Die Burger*, 4.5.1966; *Trend*, 14.6.1966.

residence and one time chairperson of the Stellenbosch NUSAS branch, Kennedy urged Afrikaners, like their white American counterparts, to share with their fellow black citizens that same freedom for which they had nobly fought colonial tyranny.⁹⁹ Having been briefed in the United States by Shingler and Coombe about the South African political situation,¹⁰⁰ Kennedy and his wife visited a number of African townships. In addition they met NUSAS's banned president and honorary president, Robertson and Luthuli respectively, Kennedy describing the latter as the most impressive man he had ever met.¹⁰¹ This was perhaps the most significant aspect of the visit. As a foreigner, Kennedy could with impunity give a voice to the banned and silenced Luthuli and so relayed his message to the people of Soweto, though what was said could not be reported in South Africa. The ANC president, Kennedy stated, was 'saddened' and 'distressed' that 'the black man does not have the same opportunities as the white man' and believed that 'the only change for the better will be brought about by God' and by peaceful means.¹⁰²

Failure to align NUSAS to the UP: the 1966 congress

The Kennedy visit flowed inexorably into the 1966 NUSAS congress. Despite the bannings of Robertson and then his deputy vice-president, Mewa Ramgobin, the assault and arrest of Fort Hare students at a ball, the continuation of the smear campaign against NUSAS, and the axe hanging over all multi-racial organisations, the congress was described as 'business as usual'.¹⁰³ It was dubbed on the whole a 'damp squib'¹⁰⁴ enlivened only by the provocative interventions of Winston Hertenberg. Hertenberg, a right wing UP Youth leader and a leading member of SACSA before Marais Steyn's intervention, founded a 'Conservative Club' at Wits in 1965. This was effectively a UP front in that it was committed to 'moderate reform in order to maintain the traditional social conditions, government system and civilised standards of South Africa'.¹⁰⁵ Hertenberg and his Conservative Club successfully campaigned for positions on the SRC and used this body as well as the student press as a platform for advancing opposition to the 'unpatriotic' NUSAS and breaking the 'liberalist clique' at Wits.¹⁰⁶ They failed, however, to win official SRC recognition for their proposed 'Federal Students Organisation' because this anti-NUSAS body had pretensions of being a national and not merely a Wits-based organisation, and more importantly, though it upheld

⁹⁹ H.J. Rudolph, 'A rhetorical analysis of Robert F. Kennedy's university addresses in South Africa, June 1966', DPhil thesis, Ohio State University, 1973, pp. 287-289.

¹⁰⁰ BC 596 B4.1, Ian Robertson to the Executive, 24.1.1966, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ *Trend*, 14.6.1966.

¹⁰² H.J. Rudolph, *op. cit.*, pp. 200, 240-241.

¹⁰³ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 18 no. 16, 29.7.1966.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.* vol. 17 no. 18, 13.8.1965.

¹⁰⁶ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1965, p. 18; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 20, 27.8.1965; *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 20, 1.9.1965; David Said to *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 21, 3.9.1965; Richard Tait to *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 24, 24.9.1965; Winston Hertenberg to *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 24, 24.9.1965.

the open membership policy of the SRC, once admitted, members would be segregated into racially separate sections.¹⁰⁷

At its 1966 congress, Hertzberg proposed that NUSAS dissociate itself from those clauses of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which conferred equal rights on all individuals and upheld a universal franchise. In this, and his other endeavours to turn NUSAS into a kind of UP, he failed spectacularly, no delegate being prepared to support him on the Universal Declaration.¹⁰⁸ In a gesture of 'rank chauvinism', some believed, and certainly most provocatively considering that most NUSAS-affiliated SRCs had remained aloof from the recently concluded Republican festivities because of their racist nature¹⁰⁹ and black universities had boycotted them,¹¹⁰ Hertzberg suggested that NUSAS fly the South African flag at future congresses and Days of Affirmation. This proposal was greeted with a barrage of protest and almost unanimously defeated. It was argued that the flag represented the South African government and a segregated South Africa, that it was viewed with hostility by the majority of South Africans and thus it could only hinder race relations were it flown at a racially integrated function like NUSAS congress.¹¹¹ These opinions on the flag were entirely consistent with current government thinking, a NP politician explaining that the 1966 electoral slogan 'one flag one country' referred to white South Africa only.¹¹² Not surprisingly, this debate unleashed a storm of protest in the press as well as accusations that NUSAS was anti-South African and unpatriotic, probably Hertzberg's intention. Consequently, the new NUSAS president, Margaret Marshall, was obliged to implement damage control. She explained, that with the exception of many black students, some of whom had been forbidden even to touch it, most students did not object to the flag as such or hold it in contempt, but that NUSAS had never flown a flag before and that few students saw the necessity of doing so.¹¹³ This might have been a good public relations exercise as far as the white public was concerned, but the flag issue alienated black students. For Steve Biko, the founder of SASO and instrumental in the black exodus from NUSAS in the early 1970s, the flag debate revealed 'that even liberal whites ultimately identified with the regime'.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1968, p. 60.

¹⁰⁸ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1966, p. 73.

¹⁰⁹ BC 586 M4.1, Ian Robertson to 'Ronnie' (?) Green Thompson, 17.3.1966.

¹¹⁰ C.C. Thomas, 'Disaffection, identity, Black Consciousness and a new rector: an exploratory take on student activism at the University of the Western Cape 1966-1976', *South African Historical Journal* vol. 54, 2005, p. 74. Students at UCWC staged a stayaway.

¹¹¹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1966, p. 71; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 18 no. 16, 29.7.1966; no. 17, 5.8.1966; *Dome*, 16.8.1966.

¹¹² *Trend*, 29.3.1966.

¹¹³ Margaret Marshall to the *Star*, 26.7.1966; Margaret Marshall to *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 18 no. 16, 29.7.1966.

¹¹⁴ Craig Charney, 'Civil society vs. the state: identity, institutions, and the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa', PhD thesis, Yale University, 2000, pp. 290-291.

Another debate in which Fort Hare and radicals from Wits and UNNE did not participate and from which six abstained from voting, was a resolution condemning the academic boycott of South African universities proposed by the British AAM.¹¹⁵ The origins of this academic boycott were known to the NUSAS executive to be mired in controversy. It emerged from a petition circulated by the AAM requesting endorsement of protest action against the South African government's treatment of Professors Simon and Roux. Many British academics signed this petition and then discovered that they had inadvertently endorsed an academic boycott of South African universities too.¹¹⁶ The proposed boycott was roundly condemned by the 'open' universities and the liberal press in South Africa as counter-productive as it would serve only to entrench apartheid rather than hinder it and would only affect the apartheid-opposing universities.¹¹⁷ South African students studying abroad who supported the boycott as 'morally right' and 'politically sound', believed that those who deplored it were concerned about white students only.¹¹⁸ Ultimately the NUSAS executive left it in the hands of its overseas representatives in London to subtly kill the initiative.¹¹⁹

Another deeply divisive motion of the 1966 NUSAS congress which had the support of perhaps slightly more than half the assembly but was not in the end voted on, opposed the intervention of the United States in South Vietnam against the will of the Vietnamese people and called for democratic elections to be held there.¹²⁰ The influence of American student preoccupations is clearly visible in NUSAS's Vietnam motion – there was an anti-Vietnam war picket at the Kennedy address – but perhaps the election of Marshall as the second only female president of NUSAS,¹²¹ suggests a faint reverberation of the emerging women's movement in the United States. Marshall's three part programme of action moved NUSAS to the right. It focussed primarily on building up NUSAS's welfare functions and then increasing its membership, promoting contact between black and white and English- and Afrikaans-speaking whites and, in an extraordinary departure from the early 1960s, initiating dialogue with the ASB.¹²² Whether Marshall would be able to carry out her programme effectively was debatable.

NUSAS's continued existence did not look promising either in the light of current political developments or at a structural level. Most of the 1965/6 executive resigned during their

¹¹⁵ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1966, pp. 27-28.

¹¹⁶ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1966, p. 19.

¹¹⁷ *NUSAS Newsletter* no. 3, 28.2.1966, pp. 12-13; *Varsity* vol. 25 no. 2, 16.3.1966.

¹¹⁸ *Varsity* vol. 25 no. 2, 16.3.1966.

¹¹⁹ BC 586 A2.2, John (Sprack) to Margie Marshall, 18.1.1967.

¹²⁰ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1966, p. 111; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 18 no. 16, 29.7.1966.

¹²¹ *Trend*, 9.8.1966.

¹²² BC 586 A3.9, 'For publication: Saturday, August 6'; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 18 no. 6, 29.7.1966.

term of office, a trend which would continue in the future.¹²³ There were a number of reasons for this, one being that executive members were often also members of their SRCs – structures which had evolved into vast administrative machines consuming up to fourteen hours per day of their incumbents' time¹²⁴ – thus making it almost impossible to do justice to other commitments like NUSAS. Whatever the reasons for the resignations, these indicated a lack of commitment to NUSAS by student leaders and, at an administrative level, seriously hampered the functioning and delivery of their departments – a problem which was exacerbated by Robertson's banning. In what was also to become a trend,¹²⁵ only five members of the UCT SRC were willing and/or able to attend the 1966 NUSAS congress. At most universities in the past, there was intense competition for delegate status to this formerly prestigious event, which was in 1966, as mentioned earlier, dismissed as a 'damp squib'. Posing an even greater challenge to NUSAS's effective future functioning was the sudden announcement by Roslyn Traub of her impending (early) retirement, brought on partly by the stresses accruing from the ARM trials and leadership bannings. As General Secretary for thirty seven years, Traub had effectively run NUSAS, providing it with the stability and institutional memory that it lacked with its rapid turnover of leadership, and moulding it into what was believed to be one of the most efficient student unions in the world.¹²⁶

Adding to NUSAS's woes was its looming financial difficulties. In the past, NUSAS's Travel Department had provided the national union with a lucrative source of income and capital accumulation, and even with the cessation of overseas tours during the Second World War, allowed the organisation to survive the war financially intact. By 1967, its tour income had declined.¹²⁷ Moreover, from the late 1950s onwards, NUSAS expanded the scope of its activities to include, for example, the administration of overseas scholarships.¹²⁸ It became increasingly dependent on the NSA (secretly funded by the CIA), which financed the phenomenally expensive leadership training seminars¹²⁹ and, from 1963, paid the salary of the vice-president too.¹³⁰ In 1964, and again in 1967, NSA experienced financial crises which in turn impacted negatively on NUSAS. For example, NSA failed to transfer the funds

¹²³ BC 586 B4.1, Margaret Marshall to the Executive, 'Executive Circular No. 2', 4.10.1967; Duncan Innes to '68/69 National Executive', 'Executive Circular No. 2', 14.10.1968.

¹²⁴ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19 no. 8, 12.5.1967.

¹²⁵ *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 15, 5.6.1968.

¹²⁶ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1966, p. 7; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 18 no. 16, 29.7.1966.

¹²⁷ B4.1, Margaret Marshall to the Executive, 'Executive Circular No. 6', 15.4.1967. It is not stated why its tour income declined. NUSAS was constantly renegotiating its terms and profit percentages with travel agents and perhaps the latest agreement had not been beneficial to NUSAS. Moreover, less luxurious tours at lower cost were also available and perhaps students chose these over the NUSAS tours.

¹²⁸ BC 586 B4.1, Jonty Driver to the Executive, 'Events from January to February 1963', 26.2.1963.

¹²⁹ BC 586 A2.1, Maeder Osler to Dave Adler, 30.3.1965.

¹³⁰ BC 586 B4.1, Jonty Driver to the Executive, 'Events from January to February 1963', 26.2.1963.

for the vice-president's salary in 1967.¹³¹ Moreover, the UCT authorities, still embroiled in the Van Zyl battle, refused to pay over to NUSAS the UCT affiliation fee as a sanction for the SRC not adopting individual enrolment.¹³² The result of this financial crisis was that in 1967 NUSAS was forced to cut its costs. The duration of the annual congress was shortened¹³³ and the number of executive posts was reduced by merging departments.¹³⁴

Politically, the southern Africa of 1966 could not present any liberal with any degree of optimism of the likelihood of democratic change. In the 1966 general election, the NP won the largest electoral majority of any political party since Union,¹³⁵ while the UP continued to haemorrhage its right wing to the NP and wither away. The PP again returned Suzman alone to parliament and remained the party of choice only for the tiny minority of wealthy urbanised English-speakers. The LP did not even contest the election, its party and personnel crippled by bannings and prohibitions.¹³⁶ From the extra-parliamentary left there was silence. Its adherents were banned or languished in prison and the great trials which gave voice to its aspirations came to an end. The exiled movements, even if they did make any progress outside South Africa, left hardly a ripple within it. Increasingly the voice of Suzman, the champion of the rightless or those whose human rights had been trampled on, filled the void, in NUSAS affairs too. Across the Limpopo, the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Rhodesia was an inspiration to white South Africans and a justification for the racial domination of the 'White African' minority.¹³⁷ Staff and students at the University College of Rhodesia were detained by the Rhodesian Front government and the college's future as a multi-racial institution, like its liberal counterparts in South Africa, looked bleak. NUSAS, as a non-racial forum, which many believed had become the organisation's most useful and important function,¹³⁸ was also in jeopardy.

Social segregation, segregatory legislation and the Conservative Students' Association

With the opening of the new post-election parliament in August 1966, the government finally introduced the dreaded Prohibition of Political Interference Bill which threatened the very

¹³¹ BC 586 A2.1, Maeder Osler to Dave Adler, 30.3.1965; B4.1, Margaret Marshall to the Executive, 'Executive Circular No. 6', 15.4.1967.

¹³² BC 586 B4.1, Margaret Marshall to the Executive, 'Executive Circular: No. 6', 15.4.1967; *Varsity* vol. 25 no. 1, 9.3.1966; no. 16, 10.8.1966.

¹³³ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1967, p. 3.

¹³⁴ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1967, pp. 60, 83.

¹³⁵ J. A. du Pisani, *John Vorster en die verlig / verkramptryd: 'n studie van die politieke verdeeldheid in Afrikanergeleedere, 1966-1970*, Institute for Contemporary History, University of the Orange Free State, Bloemfontein, 1988, p. 2.

¹³⁶ R. Vigne, *Liberals against apartheid: a history of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 1953-68*, MacMillan and St Martin's Press, Houndsmill and New York, 1997, p. 217.

¹³⁷ *Contact* vol. 9 no. 4, July 1966.

¹³⁸ *NUSAS Newsletter* no. 3, 28.2.1966, p. 40; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 18 no. 16, 29.7.1966; *Dome*, 16.8.1966.

existence of NUSAS and other organisations as multi-racial or non-racial entities. Even more drastically, having direct applicability to NUSAS and the liberal universities, two more bills, the Extension of University Education and Universities Amendment Bills, were tabled which would implement apartheid within the universities. These were all held over to the next parliamentary session following the assassination of Hendrik Verwoerd.

These bills had their origins in the continuing conflict during the 1960s over social segregation and mixed dances at the open universities, particularly at UCT. Successive SRCs, as well as a significant section of the UCT student body, remained at loggerheads with the UCT principal and University Council regarding the latter's 1958 'wish' that social functions, specifically dances, be segregated to accord with prevailing 'social mores' (discussed in chapter five). Arguing that the social mores of Cape Town were towards integration and not opposed to mixed social functions – the Cape Town City Council refusing to implement apartheid in halls/areas under its jurisdiction – successive SRCs continued to uphold the right of all to attend all social functions.¹³⁹ Over the years NUSAS and student mass meetings upheld these decisions. An agreement was almost reached between the SRC and the university authorities in early 1965 when the University Council applied to the government for a blanket exemption under Proclamation 26 for the holding of mixed functions, but this was not granted.¹⁴⁰ Finally, in August 1965, one thousand students of a one thousand two hundred-strong UCT mass meeting which included the heads of the sports union and most sports codes (excluding rugby), rag, most student societies and the residences, endorsed the SRC's earlier decision that no dances would be held at UCT at all until they were open to all.¹⁴¹

Not everyone agreed with these decisions,¹⁴² although the voting at meetings does not reflect this, conservatives being notoriously apathetic. UP supporters at both UCT and Wits – the latter's SRC having banned the 1964 rag ball and the Wits Medical Students Council having refused to host any segregated functions since 1960¹⁴³ – did not feel that their social lives should suffer because of the 'slavish adherence to inflexible principles'¹⁴⁴ or for the sake of a few and dwindling number of black students who in all probability were not even

¹³⁹ BC 586 O5.1, 'UCT SRC: Minutes of an Extraordinary meeting of the above Council held on Thursday, 11 June (?) 1959 at 7.45 p.m. in the T.B. Davie Room, Students' Union', pp. 2-3; J. Duminy to D. Clain, 5.8.1959; *Argus*, 18.6.1959; *Varsity* vol. 22 no. 12, 5.6.1963.

¹⁴⁰ *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 1, 10.3.1965.

¹⁴¹ *Cape Times*, 13.8.1965; *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 17, 11.8.1965; no. 18, 18.8.1965; *Trend*, 16.8.1965; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 19, 20.8.1965.

¹⁴² 'Belsen Pete' to *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 10, 19.5.1965; K. Forma to *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 10, 19.5.1965.

¹⁴³ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1965, p. 5; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 16 no. 20, 4.9.1964; 30.4.1965; *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 8, 5.5.1965.

¹⁴⁴ Bruce Ackerman to *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 11, 26.5.1965.

interested in attending a university dance. Others, using more sophisticated reasoning, argued that the SRCs were depriving them of their right to freedom of association and the right to hold segregated social functions. The PP too upheld the right of those who so wished to segregate themselves.¹⁴⁵ The dance issue provided an ideal opportunity to the newly formed UP-orientated Independent Students' Union (ISU)¹⁴⁶ to advance its cause at UCT and, far more dangerously, the UCT Conservative Students' Association and ultimately the government.¹⁴⁷

The origins of the government's intervention regarding social segregation at the liberal universities can be traced to the National Seminar of the Federation of Conservative Students (FCS) held in July 1965. This was a *Volkskongres* and anti-NUSAS event addressed by Jaap Marais, Andries Treurnicht (later the leader of the 1982 right wing breakaway Conservative Party), and Dr John Allen¹⁴⁸ of the apartheid-supporting Church of England in South Africa and vice-chairperson of the National Council to Combat Communism.¹⁴⁹ Here the Conservative Students' Associations of Pretoria and Stellenbosch disaffiliated from the national body because they were unable to secure for themselves official SRC recognition, ostensibly because some FCS affiliates, notably the UCT CSA, had racially open membership¹⁵⁰ – a requirement for the CSA's registration at UCT. In August 1965, Van Zyl announced that because of the problems faced by the Pretoria and Stellenbosch conservative associations, the UCT CSA had elected to become a whites-only body. In addition, in direct contravention of SRC policy, he stated that the CSA would hold a whites-only dance in Jameson Hall.¹⁵¹ He claimed that both the SRC's constitution and its policy on societies and social functions were *ultra vires* as they ran counter to government policy and would accordingly be defied.¹⁵² Moreover, he argued that black students at UCT were not really students but were only there on sufferance in a temporary capacity to complete their academic courses.¹⁵³ The SRC issued an ultimatum to the CSA: reverse the

¹⁴⁵ B. Hackland, 'The Progressive Party, 1960-1980: political responses to structural change and class struggle', Collected Seminar Papers, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 33, 1984, p. 125. Black people could only move into white residential areas if the majority of whites living there agreed. J. Strangewayes-Booth, *A cricket in the thorn tree: Helen Suzman and the Progressive Party*, Hutchinson, Johannesburg, 1976, p. 208.

¹⁴⁶ *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 20, 1.9.1965; no. 21, 8.9.1965; *Trend*, 1.10.1965. The ISU was founded by James Ramsay, a member of the UP who as a UP councillor in the 1970s would be one of the 'Young Turks' who would eventually leave the party and join the PP.

¹⁴⁷ *Trend*, 31.8.1965.

¹⁴⁸ BC 586 S9, Peter Mansfield to the Presidents of Student Councils, Chairmen, Local NUSAS Committees, Student Press, Overseas Reps, 'The Federation of Conservative Students (FCS)', 13.8.1965, p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ *South African Observer* vol. 12 no. 1, October 1966; M.C. Arbutnot to *South African Observer* vol. 12 no. 2, November 1966.

¹⁵⁰ BC 586 S9, Peter Mansfield to the Presidents of Student Councils, Chairmen, Local NUSAS Committees, Student Press, Overseas Reps, 'The Federation of Conservative Students (FCS)', 13.8.1965, p. 5.

¹⁵¹ *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 16, 4.8.1965, no. 17, 11.8.1965.

¹⁵² *Trend*, 3.8.1965; *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 17, 11.8.1965.

¹⁵³ *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 16, 4.8.1965; no. 17, 11.8.1965.

racist decision or face dissolution.¹⁵⁴ A week later the CSA ceased to exist and Van Zyl appealed to the principal to over-rule the SRC's decision.¹⁵⁵ At this point, the SABC, as was its wont, entered the fray. It claimed that the CSA was fighting for its right to exist against a tyrannical NUSAS-controlled SRC. For the sake of a handful of black students, this SRC, it argued, was depriving freedom of association to those with whom it differed, even to the extent of banning student dances. Moreover, in contravention of government policy it was enforcing racial integration on those who did not wish to be integrated.¹⁵⁶ Verwoerd followed this up at the Transvaal NP congress by issuing a veiled warning to those liberal students propounding multi-racialism that they might find themselves forced to accept government policy.¹⁵⁷

In February 1966, at the beginning of the new academic year, the University Council publicly made known its decision to uphold the SRC's rulings regarding the holding of dances and the non-recognition of the CSA.¹⁵⁸ Nonetheless, the CSA, operating under a temporary reprieve until then,¹⁵⁹ refused initially to vacate its whites-only table. It defiantly attempted to recruit students to both the CSA and the *Afrikaanse Studentekring*, newly designated whites-only too. It also used this platform to advertise its whites-only dance as well as sell the Hertzog group's sanctions-busting Rhodesian petrol coupons.¹⁶⁰ However, the University Council's decision effectively marked the demise of the CSA at UCT. Two of its executive members resigned during 1965,¹⁶¹ one joining the NUSAS Local Committee as Director of Research.¹⁶² Van Zyl retired from UCT for a time to focus on his election campaign as a NP candidate for Wynberg which he fought on an anti-NUSAS and anti-liberal UCT ticket.¹⁶³ Following his electoral defeat, he returned briefly to UCT to muster his troops (five in all) for a counter-demonstration in favour of Ian Robertson's banning.¹⁶⁴ However, despite Van Zyl's limited student appeal, his legacy and that of the CSA's lived on and were almost fatal to the open universities and NUSAS.

Shortly after the demise of the CSA, Senator Jan de Klerk, the Minister of Education, attacked the 'unbridled liberalism' of the UCT SRC and the 'untenable position' existing at

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.* no. 17, 11.8.1965; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 19, 20.8.1965.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 19, 20.8.1965.

¹⁵⁷ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1966, pp. 35-36; Assembly Minutes 1966, p. 36; *Rhodeo*, 26.8.1965.

¹⁵⁸ *Die Burger*, 16.2.1966; 17.2.1966; *Argus*, 19.3.1967.

¹⁵⁹ BC 586 B3 Executive Minutes 1965, p. 21.

¹⁶⁰ *Die Burger*, 24.2.1966. Petrol was rationed in Rhodesia after sanctions were imposed on it after UDI. Rhodesians bought petrol with government-issued petrol coupons.

¹⁶¹ *Trend*, 16.8.1965.

¹⁶² *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 10, 19.5.1965.

¹⁶³ *ibid.* vol. 25 no. 4, 30.3.1966.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.* no. 11, 25.5.1966.

UCT and threatened to introduce legislation to prevent social mixing on white campuses.¹⁶⁵ In an attempt to appease the government, although Duminy denied that this had anything to do with the minister's announcement, the UCT Council hurriedly appointed a commission of inquiry to investigate the SRC constitution.¹⁶⁶ At the same time the university administration attempted to sever the SRC from NUSAS by refusing to pay over to NUSAS the UCT affiliation fees until the SRC agreed to abandon centre enrolment.¹⁶⁷

While the SRC was engrossed in the Council's year-long commission of inquiry which was aimed at drastically curbing student power, De Klerk made good on his threat to end the 'untenable position' pertaining at the liberal universities and, as mentioned earlier, tabled his two apartheid measures, the Extension of University Education Amendment and the University Amendment Bills in the House of Assembly in August 1966. These would have the effect of barring black students from any campus organisation which was not specifically connected to a student's academic studies, including religious associations and NUSAS, and enabled the state to cut-off its subsidy to any university which either prevented or discriminated against those who wished to be segregated.¹⁶⁸ In addition to putting an end to racial mixing, these two bills could be seen within the context of the new National Education Plan. This Plan was introduced in 1967, and, like the Bantu Education Act applicable to African education, was intended to seize control over all aspects of white education and mould it into Christian National conformity. John Daniel, NUSAS's vice-president, denounced the De Klerk Bills as the 'most drastic pieces of legislation dealing with student affairs to be introduced by the government', as they destroyed the last vestiges of academic freedom and spelt the end of organised freedom of association at universities, including the continuing existence of NUSAS. He paid tribute to the spirit of democracy at the liberal universities which refused to bow to government policy, thereby requiring 'all the might of a totalitarian government to bend these students...to its will'.¹⁶⁹

SRCs and student bodies affiliated to NUSAS immediately rallied. But, at UCT, to the probable satisfaction of the government, which through its planting of spies perhaps had something to do with this, there was no university-wide unity, all was conflict, division and confusion. The UP-orientated students were demanding their dances while the SRC and *Varsity* were attacking Duminy. Ironically, given the foregoing, the president of the deeply

¹⁶⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1966, p. 37; *Argus*, 18.2.1966; *Die Burger*, 18.2.1966; *Varsity* vol. 25 no. 1, 9.3.1966.

¹⁶⁶ *Cape Times*, 3.3.1966; *Die Burger*, 9.3.1966; *Varsity* vol. 25 no. 1, 9.3.1966.

¹⁶⁷ *Varsity* vol. 25 no. 16, 10.8.1966; BC 586 B1 1967, Ian Hume, 'University of Cape Town Student Council: Report to NUSAS Congress, 1967', p. 1; B4.1, Margaret Marshall to the Executive: 'Executive Circular No. 6', 15.4.1967.

¹⁶⁸ *Varsity* vol. 25 no. 15, 5.8.1966; no. 16, 10.8.1966; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 18 no. 18, 12.8.1966.

¹⁶⁹ *NUSAS Newsletter* no. 1 1966/7, 5.10.1966, p. 1.

divided, back-biting SRC, bowing to pressure from the university authorities, fired the editor of *Varsity* for his refusal to adequately apologise to Duminy for *Varsity's* sustained and scathing attacks on his hypocritical attitude to academic freedom and his response to Robertson's banning.

Clipping the wings of student power at UCT and Durban

In January 1967 the new UCT SRC constitution was unveiled. It allowed the University Council to terminate the office of the SRC and in a probable attempt to depoliticise and deliberalise future SRCs, stipulated that half its representatives would in future come from faculties rather than the general student body as in the past. However, 'Clause 17' was the real bone of contention in that it allowed for clubs and societies to limit their membership to one race group only. This constitution met the satisfaction of the government, which consequently dropped the De Klerk Bills.¹⁷⁰ Student commentators believed that the government was reluctant to legislate, preferring the university authorities to do its dirty work for it. Segregatory legislation, it was argued, would create a negative impression of the new 'Outward Policy'¹⁷¹ of Verwoerd's successor, John Vorster. This new policy courted the friendship of black African states, freed black African diplomats from the strictures of petty apartheid and opened the way for the selection of a multi-racial South African Olympic team.

Even though they had been preparing for this for nearly a year, the still deeply divided SRC had clearly no plan on how to proceed when the new constitution came into effect. During a series of meetings with the conservative¹⁷² University Council, the SRC managed to win a number of concessions but on Clause 17 the Council would not budge.¹⁷³ Thus the SRC decided to reject the new constitution, explain why and then continue to operate under it. This seemed like capitulation to NUSAS. Because this had such far-reaching implications for the future of all student government and ultimately of NUSAS, the NUSAS executive, the Overseas Committee and the Standing Committee secretly advised the UCT SRC to take a radical 'last stand'. This entailed refusing to work under the new constitution and then securing an endorsement from the student body for their defiance of the University Council.¹⁷⁴ The SRC was however reluctant to follow this confrontational and unpredictable course and instead secured a student body mandate to draw up its own constitution and continue negotiations with the Council.¹⁷⁵ This resulted in the resignation of its radical

¹⁷⁰ *Cape Times*, 20.2.1967; *NUSAS Newsletter* no. 3, 1967, p. 2; M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1967*, South African Institute of Race Relations, Cape Town, 1968, p. 281.

¹⁷¹ *Varsity* vol. 26 no. 13, 7.6.1967.

¹⁷² The UCT Council was not composed entirely of conservatives. Leo Marquard was one of its members.

¹⁷³ BC 586 A2.2, John Sprack to Margaret Marshall, 10.3.1967.

¹⁷⁴ BC 586 A2.1, Margaret Marshall to Merton Shill, 21.3.1967.

¹⁷⁵ *Argus*, 23.3.1967.

members, Mary Simons (daughter of Jack Simons), Gerry Derby-Lewis (brother of convicted Hani murderer, Clive Derby-Lewis) and Raymond Suttner, the latter who objected to the SRC president's tendency to negotiate with an 'open agenda' rather than on the basis of 'non-negotiable principles'.¹⁷⁶ When these negotiations deadlocked, the SRC made a 'unilateral declaration of independence', becoming an unofficial body operating under its old non-racist constitution outside the ambit of the University Council.¹⁷⁷ Far from everyone on either the SRC or within the student body accepted what many, including the NP press, designated the 'illegal' actions of the SRC.¹⁷⁸ Arguing that the new constitution was in force, the CSA endeavoured to reconstitute itself¹⁷⁹ while societies attempted to host segregated dances.¹⁸⁰ Matters came to a head following the 1967 elections. On assuming power unofficially on the basis of the old constitution, the SRC indignantly refused Duminy's directive that it serve as an interim student council at his discretion.¹⁸¹ Shortly before this, Duminy had banned *Varsity* because of its NUSAS-endorsed investigation into the academic incompetence of the Sociology Department. With student affairs rapidly descending into chaos, Duminy took long leave and retired from office at the end of 1967.

Dr E.G. Malherbe also retired from his long principalship of Natal University. His place was taken in 1967 by Owen Horwood, who though later a NP Minister of Finance, committed himself to upholding academic freedom. Almost immediately it was clear that this was not the case and fears were expressed that he planned to entirely restructure student affairs according to his own hitherto unrevealed plan. Following months of conflict with the SRC and the editor of the student newspaper, *Dome* regarding the powers of student government and the freedom of the press, Horwood suspended both the Durban SRC and *Dome*, banned student gatherings of more than twenty five students and severely restricted the campus activities of a number of student leaders including Peter Mansfield, a former NUSAS vice-president. Claiming that political agitators had infiltrated the university – untruthfully – the conflict was precipitated by a protest over the quality of residence food and Horwood's unprecedented interference in 'Freshers' Reception' and fuelled by the prohibition of hockey and drum majorettes tours, Horwood appointed a commission of inquiry in May 1967 to investigate the SRC constitution and the necessity for a student newspaper.¹⁸² As

¹⁷⁶ Raymond Suttner via email, 2.12.2014.

¹⁷⁷ BC 586 B1 Ian Hume, 'University of Cape Town Student Council: Report to NUSAS Congress, 1967'; *Trend*, 4.4.1967; 18.4.1967.

¹⁷⁸ *Argus*, 23.3.1967.

¹⁷⁹ *Cape Times*, 8.4.1967.

¹⁸⁰ *NUSAS Newsletter* no. 3, 1967, p. 5.

¹⁸¹ *Trend*, 20.9.1967.

¹⁸² BC 586 A3.10, Owen Horwood to Margaret Marshall, 5.5.1967; 19.5.1967; 18.9.1967; Margaret Marshall to Owen Horwood, 30.5.1967; B1, B. Budke, 'University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg Centre Report', Appendices B and C, p. iv, 1967; C. Leeman, 'NUSAS Local Committee, Durban: Report to Annual National Congress', p. 2, 1967; R. Ragaven, 'National Union of South African Students 43rd Student Assembly: University of Natal, UNNE

ominously, the editors of both the Durban and Pietermaritzburg student newspapers were interviewed by the security police. A mass meeting to discuss Horwood's actions was banned resulting in a student body sit-in outside the administration building.¹⁸³ Some months later all protest meetings were proscribed at UNNE too.¹⁸⁴ The Standing Committee and NUSAS again rallied.¹⁸⁵ Marshall attacked the abrogation of academic freedom at Durban during the National Day of Affirmation at Pietermaritzburg attended also by Horwood.¹⁸⁶ Campus newspapers were sent to Durban to counteract the suspension of *Dome*, *Wits Student* carrying details of the Durban conflict in an article written by David Hemson, *Dome's* suspended editor.¹⁸⁷

Durban and UCT were not alone in experiencing conflict with their administrations and administrations which moreover appeared keen to remain on the right side of the government. The editors of Wits's 'Loo', a 'newspaper' pasted to the university walls, were found guilty by the university court of actions liable to incite racial ill-feeling and bring the university into disrepute after the ASK and the government-supporting press complained about the 'publication' of a satirical article mocking racial purity and apartheid.¹⁸⁸ At Rhodes, students censured the University Senate for devaluing honorary degrees by vastly increasing the number conferred. Moreover, they protested the award of such degrees to Duminy of UCT and Nico Malan, the administrator of the Cape, and questioned the motives of the Rhodes authorities in continuing to bestow such honours on NP politicians whose contributions to academic and national life were debatable.¹⁸⁹

These events at UCT, Durban, Wits and Rhodes, occurred against the backdrop of the massive student-administration standoff at the London School of Economics (LSE). This was precipitated by student protest against the appointment of Dr Walter Adams, the former principal of the University College of Rhodesia as the institution's new director and the subsequent suspension of 'foreign agitators', including the South African-born president of the Students' Union, David Adelstein.¹⁹⁰ Like at Berkley, LSE students called for the

Section', p. 3, 1967; B1 Presidential Report 1968, p. 47; Addendum, Margaret Marshall to 'Sir/Madam', 21.8.1967; B4.1, Margaret Marshall to SRC Presidents and Vice-Presidents, Local Chairmen, NUSAS Executive, Advisory Panel, Overseas Representatives, Student Editors, 11.4.1968, p. 1; *Dome*, 12.4.1967; *Varsity* vol. 26 no. 8, 26.4.1967; no. 11, 24.5.1967; no. 14, 14.6.1967; no. 15, 21.6.1967; no. 21, 23.8.1967; *Trend*, 22.6.1967.

¹⁸³ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19, no. 14, 28.6.1967.

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.* no. 20, 1.9.1967.

¹⁸⁵ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1967, p. 34.

¹⁸⁶ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19, no. 14, 28.6.1967; J. Daniel, 'A history of NUSAS in action', *South African Outlook*, January 1974, p. 6.

¹⁸⁷ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19, no. 14, 28.6.1967.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.* no. 8, 12.5.1967.

¹⁸⁹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19 no. 6, 14.4.1967; no. 7, 21.4.1967; *Dome*, 12.5.1967.

¹⁹⁰ There was another South African dimension to this conflict. Adams was regarded as too liberal by the Rhodesian Front government who demanded his resignation after he protected a black student who had broken

democratisation of education and an end to 'gerontocracy' and embraced international socialism and neo-Marxism. At a NUSAS-convened meeting of the Standing Committee in June 1967, fears were expressed that all SRCs and student bodies risked interference in their activities and the amendment of their constitutions.¹⁹¹ From this flowed the 'Conference on students in the modern university' in July 1968, at which students and academics called for greater autonomy for student government as well as the bridging of the 'generational gap' between 'gerontocracy' and students. In June 1967, shortly before his newspaper's suppression, the editor of *Dome* suggested that students seek direct representation on the sub-committees of the University of Natal.¹⁹² In a far more radical vein, echoing the disenchantment of the European and North American New Left with traditional western power structures and modes of consciousness, the *Dome* editorial averred that everyone was imprisoned. Students needed to act as free agents and size up the dogmas of government. More radically, the editorial argued, once students had extricated themselves from Western society they could conceptualise their Africanness. This resonated with the soon to emerge Black Consciousness thought (UCT's Radical Society journal, *Radical* engaging with Franz Fanon¹⁹³ whose ideas on psychological colonialism would infuse Black Consciousness) and the much later attempt by radical white NUSAS activists to respond positively to black exclusivity. This also challenged NUSAS's defence of Western values and democracy when opposing apartheid measures. The editor of *Wits Student* and future NUSAS president, Neville Curtis, resurrected the dying and suppressed history of the congresses and infused it with new methods of struggle. On the sudden and suspicious death in 1967 of Albert Luthuli,¹⁹⁴ Curtis urged Wits students to stage effective protests like those undertaken in the past by Luthuli and thus, instead of weak banner waving demonstrations, embrace passive resistance and sit-ins.¹⁹⁵ These radical ideas were limited to a very small grouping of students, the bulk of student bodies edging closer to the right as will be seen. However, it could be argued that a fear of local campus conflict escalating to a full-scale challenge of university and perhaps even state authority in the manner of the

the security laws. However in the context of UDI, Adams was considered too conservative by black Rhodesian students. One of his actions with which they took issue was his invitation to Dr Duminy of UCT to be the guest of honour at the July 1966 graduation ceremony.

¹⁹¹ BC 586 M4.1, Paul David and V. S. Ramashuva, 'University of Natal: Students' Representative Council Annual General Report, September 1967'.

¹⁹² *Dome*, 9.6.1967.

¹⁹³ A. Nash, 'The moment of Western Marxism in South Africa', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* vol. 19 no. 1, 1999, p. 68.

¹⁹⁴ Luthuli had a large following of white people, a reason why the state feared him and thus the reason why his death, crossing a railway line he often negotiated, may not have been purely accidental. R. Suttner, 'The road to freedom is via the cross', 'just means' in Chief Albert Luthuli's life' *South African Historical Journal* vol. 62 no. 4, 2010, p. 712. Though it has been noted that the right wing exploited the fact that Luthuli was NUSAS's honorary president and Durban walked out of the 1963 NUSAS congress when their candidate for honorary president was rejected, Maeder Osler believed that students were quite accepting of Luthuli. Maeder Osler telephonically, 8.12.2014.

¹⁹⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19 no. 15, 28.7.1967.

northern hemisphere student revolts, had a bearing on the stabilisation of campus student-administration conflict, Marshall having endorsed current criticisms of suspensions and other 'stern measures' in relation to events at the LSE.¹⁹⁶

In early 1968 Sir Richard Luyt, the former governor of Guiana, assumed the vice-chancellorship of UCT. Luyt was cast in a more independent, open-minded and flexible mould than his older predecessor. At Luyt's inauguration he laid down a challenge to the government by declaring that 'in spite of huge financial support from the state, universities should be left to run their own affairs'.¹⁹⁷ At the same time, a workable though controversial solution to the constitutional crisis was found. Although Clause 17 remained, the principle of open membership of clubs and societies was entrenched in the SRC's standing rules and orders.¹⁹⁸ Soon after this, integrated dances resumed at UCT.¹⁹⁹ Why the government did not intervene at this stage and re-introduce the De Klerk Bills is open to conjecture. Its integrity regarding its outward looking international policy was perhaps one reason, as was the fact that Horwood was proving to be a reliable agent in the fight against 'unbridled liberalism' and perhaps it really was committed to some very limited reform of apartheid. However, the most probable reason was its pre-occupation with the intensifying *verligte-verkrampte* war.

The *verligte-verkrampte* war and dialogue with the ASB and its affiliated student bodies

The brewing *verligte-verkrampte* war over relations with the outside world and non-Afrikaners, immigration, and the pragmatic dilution of apartheid²⁰⁰ burst into the open in 1966. At the ASB's annual congress that year, Sam de Beer²⁰¹ (brother of Paul de Beer) and Roux Wildenboer were instrumental in the organisation expressing a motion of thanks to S.E.D. Brown, the editor of the Hertzogite monthly English newsletter, the *South African Observer*. His newsletter had launched a series of scathing attacks on more *verligte* Afrikaner Nationalists like Rembrandt's Anton Rupert (reproved as 'new money'²⁰²) and H.B. Thom, rector of Stellenbosch University, dismissing them as liberals and unAfrikaans.²⁰³ This ASB motion attracted much negative publicity in both parliament and the press. It prompted

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.* no. 14, 28.6.1967.

¹⁹⁷ F. Burrows, 'UCT, student activism and apartheid 1957-1968', BA Honours dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2003, pp. 58-59.

¹⁹⁸ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1968, p. 28; *Argus*, 20.3.1968; 'MS' to *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 3, 27.3.1968.

¹⁹⁹ J. Daniel, 'A history of NUSAS in action', *South African Outlook*, January 1974, p. 7.

²⁰⁰ J.A. du Pisani, *op. cit.*, pp. 16, 33-54.

²⁰¹ He became a NP MP in 1974 and during the late 1990s crossed the floor to the ANC. 'De Beer, Samuel Johannes (Sam)', Pdraig O' Malley, Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory, <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/03lvo2424/041vo2426/05lv02467.htm> accessed 18.8.2015.

²⁰² *South African Observer* vol. 12 no. 1, October 1966.

²⁰³ J.H.P. Serfontein, *op. cit.*, pp. 31, 37, 59-60.

more than a thousand Stellenbosch students into signing a petition repudiating the Brown motion and then convening a mass meeting to affirm this when Boy Geldenhuys, president of both the Stellenbosch SRC and ASB ruled the petition unconstitutional.²⁰⁴ A new Stellenbosch group, the 'Students' Union', headed by among others, Van Drimmelen, Robert Kennedy's Stellenbosch host, established a campus newspaper which was critical of aspects of ASB policy and, significantly, was affiliated to the NUSAS-aligned South African National Students' Press Union.²⁰⁵ The reaction to the 'Brown motion' was less dramatic on other ASB campuses although the Pretoria SRC, which had originally initiated and voted unanimously for the motion at the ASB congress, did an about turn due to intense pressure²⁰⁶ and dissociated itself from both the *Observer's* attacks on prominent Afrikaners as well as the newspaper's editor.²⁰⁷ Significantly, following an approach by the Wits SRC president, the first meeting in thirty years between the Pretoria and Wits SRCs took place in August 1966. The delegates discussed practical issues such as rag and intervarsity.²⁰⁸

It was in this promising environment that NUSAS initiated its dialogue with the ASB. Initially this made little progress, the ASB cancelling a debate at Wits in 1966.²⁰⁹ However, the NUSAS president believed that the fallout from the 'Brown motion', coupled to Vorster's new outward policy and wooing of English-speakers, put pressure on the ASB to adopt a new image in 1967.²¹⁰ Thus Geldenhuys finally agreed to debate Marshall at Stellenbosch in April 1967.²¹¹ However, because of the application of segregation at Stellenbosch, this took place in front of an entirely white audience, an abrogation of NUSAS principles which courted controversy at the next NUSAS congress (discussed later). To a capacity audience, Geldenhuys hotly refuted the excited press's designation of the historic event as an attempt to patch up the differences between NUSAS and the ASB, declaring that the two organisations were entirely incompatible. To great acclaim, Marshall stressed the practical

²⁰⁴ J.A. du Pisani, *op. cit.*, p. 15; C. Heymans, 'Die politieke en ideologiese strominge en aktiwiteite in en om die Afrikaanse Studentebond (1948-1980), MA dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 1981, p. 56.

²⁰⁵ At the same time, Van Drimmelen was dismissed from his part-time post at the SABC. BC 586 B4.2, John Daniel to Overseas Representatives and the Executive, 2.11.1966, p. 5.

²⁰⁶ The *South African Observer* alleged that huge pressure was brought to bear on the ASB and its SRCs by 'New Nationalists' and 'new money', the Rembrandt Group deploying its public relations officer to Stellenbosch for this purpose. Rembrandt was also allegedly behind the 'leftist and NUSAS-orientated' Stellenbosch leaders like Willem van Drimmelen and Christo Wiese. *South African Observer* vol. 12 no. 1, October 1966. Wiese is the owner of retail giants Pepkor and Shoprite (i.e. 'new money') but was then a leading anti-SA *Observer* protagonist and future son-in-law of UP MP, Japie Basson, who had first raised the 'Brown motion' in parliament.

²⁰⁷ BC 586 B4.1, Margaret Marshall to SRC Presidents, Chairmen NUSAS Local Committees, National Executive, Overseas Representatives, International Student Organisations, Advisory Panel and Honorary Officers, Editors Student Newspapers, 'A new image for the ASB?', 4.4.1967, p. 1; J.A. du Pisani, *op. cit.*, p. 15; *South African Observer* vol. 12 no. 1, October 1966.

²⁰⁸ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 17 no. 4, 18.3.1966; no. 19, 19.8.1966.

²⁰⁹ *ibid.* no. 24, 23.9.1966.

²¹⁰ BC 586 B4.1, Margaret Marshall to SRC Presidents, Chairmen NUSAS Local Committees, National Executive, Overseas Representatives, International Student Organisations, Advisory Panel and Honorary Officers, Editors Student Newspapers, 'A new image for the ASB?', 4.4.1967, pp. 1-3.

²¹¹ BC 586 A2.1, Margaret Marshall to Merton Shill, 21.3.1967; B1 Presidential Report 1967, pp. 46-47.

student benefits derived by NUSAS members. Geldenhuys was critically quizzed on the ASB's practical student benefits, or lack thereof. In reference to NUSAS's vibrant Travel Department and perhaps alluding to the Hertzog Group and the hold of the North over the ASB, one student sarcastically remarked that the ASB was always travelling to Pretoria.²¹² Not surprisingly, the NUSAS Stellenbosch branch grew in size after this debate.²¹³ At the follow-up debate at UCT, Geldenhuys agreed to appear before a racially mixed audience.²¹⁴ Marshall cautioned against viewing these overtures to the ASB as overly significant – they were billed inaccurately as the first debate between the opposing student unions in thirty years – unless they led to improving white co-operation, which they did not. However, later developments on the Afrikaans campuses did look promising to UP-aligned students in the ISU at UCT and the newly formed national body, the South African Students' Union (SASU), which were both committed to ending the dominance of NUSAS and the ASB on the English- and Afrikaans-medium campuses respectively. Though SASU was banned on the Afrikaans campuses,²¹⁵ it claimed to have strong support at Stellenbosch.²¹⁶

Challenges to ASB and NUSAS hegemony

The *verligte-verkrampste* war heated up in February 1968 when Vorster relieved Albert Hertzog of one of his cabinet portfolios.²¹⁷ In May 1968, against the background of the student revolts in France, a three thousand-strong Stellenbosch mass meeting voted to disaffiliate from the ASB and then facilitate the establishment of a 'democratic' ASB to which students could join as individuals. Louis du Plessis, later fired as chairperson of the Stellenbosch student NP branch, dismissed the ASB as nothing more than 'a clique of unemployed verkrampstes' who were 'as stupid as they were verkrampst'. At the ASB's recent conference, Du Plessis stated, 'delegates had spoken in a disgusting way about English-speaking students and speaker after speaker had been cheered for calling for only one language in South Africa' which, he argued, was in direct contravention of the Vorster government's policy of equal rights for both white language groups.²¹⁸ The SRC reluctantly gave notice of Stellenbosch's disaffiliation from the ASB, the Pretoria SRC elected to

²¹² BC 586 B4.1, Margaret Marshall to SRC Presidents, Local Committee Chairmen, National Executive, Editors student newspapers, 27.4.1967; *Varsity* vol. 26 no. 9, 10.5.1967.

²¹³ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19 no. 23, 29.9.1967.

²¹⁴ *Varsity* vol. 26 no. 20, 16.8.1967.

²¹⁵ *ibid.* no. 19, 9.8.1967; vol. 27 no. 12, 15.5.1968. The president of SASU and the outgoing UCT ISU president was Johan van der Burgh, a nephew of De Villiers Graaff. The new president of the UCT ISU was Andre Jacobs, the son of UP MP, Gideon Jacobs. *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 17, 19.6.1968.

²¹⁶ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1967*, *op. cit.*, pp. 287-288.

²¹⁷ D. O' Meara, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

²¹⁸ BC 586 B4.1, Duncan Innes to SRC Presidents, External Vice-Presidents, Executive, Local Chairmen, National Executive, Honorary Officers, Advisory Board, Overseas Representatives, Overseas National Unions, Overseas International Student Organisations, Miscellaneous individuals and organisations, 'Disaffiliation of Stellenbosch University SRC from Afrikaner Studentebond (ASB)', 6.6.1968, pp. 1-2.

investigate it, while Potchefstroom and the Orange Free State remained firmly loyal.²¹⁹ Publicly, the NUSAS president welcomed the developments at Stellenbosch as perhaps ushering in a new period of English-Afrikaans co-operation.²²⁰ Privately however, he believed that NUSAS would derive no benefit from these on the Afrikaans campuses as they did not represent a liberalisation of student opinion, but rather a split within the NP between those who supported Vorster's more open policy and those who did not. Nonetheless, the Stellenbosch NUSAS branch was encouraged to re-apply for official campus registration.²²¹

In the pursuit of white co-operation, the ISU and the SASU decided to make good on the disarray in Afrikaner student ranks and engineered a disaffiliation bid of UCT from NUSAS in June 1968.²²² To achieve this, they identified and exploited the most controversial issue to white students of the day, namely the 1967, SRC-endorsed NUSAS resolution on Rhodesia.²²³ This condemned *inter alia* the Rhodesian government's policies of racial discrimination, detention without trial, the indiscriminate use of the death penalty and the abrogation of freedom of the press and movement, and pledged NUSAS's support to all those working for a non-racial and democratic Rhodesia.²²⁴ The UCT SRC refused to dissociate itself from the Rhodesian motion and the one thousand-strong mass meeting decided not to change its method of affiliation.²²⁵ This was surprising given how closely white society (and students)²²⁶ observed the unfolding liberation war in Rhodesia. Alarming, this came closer to home in December 1967 with the inclusion of MK combatants in the 'Wankie Campaign' and on the opposing side, the assistance given to the Rhodesian government by South African forces.

²¹⁹ BC 586 B4.1, Duncan Innes to SRC Presidents, External Vice-Presidents, Executive, Local Chairmen, National Executive, Honorary Officers, Advisory Board, Overseas Representatives, Overseas National Unions, Overseas International Student Organisations, Miscellaneous individuals and organisations, 'Disaffiliation of Stellenbosch University SRC from Afrikaner Studentebond (ASB)', 6.6.1968, p. 3.

²²⁰ *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 13, 22.5.1968.

²²¹ BC 586 B4.1, Duncan Innes to SRC Presidents, External Vice-Presidents, Executive, Local Chairmen, National Executive, Honorary Officers, Advisory Board, Overseas Representatives, Overseas National Unions, Overseas International Student Organisations, Miscellaneous individuals and organisations, 'Disaffiliation of Stellenbosch University SRC from Afrikaner Studentebond (ASB)', 6.6.1968, p. 3.

²²² The Conservative Students' Associations established countrywide in 1964 were in disarray because of the *verligte-verkrampste* struggle. In 1967 they announced that they had severed their financial and ideological ties with the Hertzog group and the *Volkskongres* and would establish a new group 'Students for South Africa' which would be 'positive' and not preoccupied with anti-NUSAS activities. *Varsity* vol. 16 no. 19, 9.8.1967. It does not seem as if this new group got off the ground, thus opening the way for the UP's ISU and SASU.

²²³ *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 17, 19.6.1968.

²²⁴ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1967, p. 70.

²²⁵ *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 15; 5.6.1968; no. 16, 12.6.1968; no. 17, 19.6.1968.

²²⁶ Students did follow events in Rhodesia closely and were aware of the South African dimension in the Wankie campaign, but would not have described this event thus. Horst Kleinshmidt telephonically, 7.10.2014.

Disaffiliation bids along similar lines to that of UCT materialised at Durban,²²⁷ Pietermaritzburg and Wits, provoking some heated responses.²²⁸ The Pietermaritzburg SRC had already dissociated itself entirely from the Rhodesian resolution at the 1967 congress because it argued, nearly forty percent of those it represented were Rhodesian and would not support the sentiments of the resolution.²²⁹ As tellingly, the Local NUSAS Committee restructured itself into a less political body to make it more representative of (conservative) student opinion.²³⁰ The Pietermaritzburg student body was also comparatively conservative and hostile to NUSAS²³¹ but nonetheless narrowly voted to remain in the national union.²³² Believing that it could oust NUSAS from the university, the Conservative Club, possibly with help from the state, mounted a very strong challenge to the national union at Wits.²³³ Anti-NUSAS smear pamphlets appeared on the campus²³⁴ and some members of the Conservative Club, particularly those at JCE where the organisation was strong, had links to the state and the police.²³⁵ NUSAS had to pull out all the stops to retain its strong position at Wits.²³⁶ A mass meeting only narrowly voted to retain Wits's NUSAS affiliation²³⁷ though a subsequent referendum (during which suspiciously a ballot box went on fire) delivered a greater vote of confidence in the national union.²³⁸

Formation of the University Christian Movement (UCM)

Coinciding with the emergence of the ISU and SASU and their right wing challenge to NUSAS, was the establishment in 1966/7 of the radical, non-racial ecumenical University Christian Movement (UCM). Though the UCM posed no threat to the secular NUSAS and moreover, there were close ties between it and NUSAS at both leadership²³⁹ and (overlapping) membership²⁴⁰ level, its formation was important. As Brickhill and Brooks have

²²⁷ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 20 no. 14, 20.6.1968.

²²⁸ *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 23, 28.8.1968. Some students at Rhodes ceremoniously burnt the anti-NUSAS pamphlets.

²²⁹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1967, p. 70.

²³⁰ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1968, p. 45.

²³¹ BC 586 B1(iii)1968, 'Address by the then president of the National Union, John Daniel in early 1968 on the role and future of NUSAS', p. 5,

<http://www.aluka.org/action/show/Metadata?doi=10.5555/AL.SFF.DOCUMENT.SPE19680500.026.022.00>
accessed 25.9.2013.

²³² *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 17, 19.6.1968.

²³³ Horst Kleinschmidt telephonically, 7.10.2014.

²³⁴ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 20 no. 13, 13.6.1968.

²³⁵ Some JCE students would later take up posts in South African embassies. There were also genuine conservatives in the Conservative Club who would keep NUSAS informed of police activity in the Club. Horst Kleinschmidt telephonically, 7.10.2014.

²³⁶ Horst Kleinschmidt telephonically, 7.10.2014; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 20 no. 14, 20.6.1968.

²³⁷ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1968, pp. 33, 43; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 20 no. 13, 13.6.1968.

²³⁸ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 20 no. 14, 20.6.1968; *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 17, 19.6.1968.

²³⁹ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1967, p. 39; Presidential Report 1968, p. 58; A. Brooks and J. Brickhill, *Whirlwind before the storm: the origins and development of the uprising in Soweto and the rest of South Africa from June to December 1976*, International Defence and Aid Fund, London, 1980, p. 72.

²⁴⁰ The future president of the UCM, Justice Moloto was a member of the NUSAS Local Committee at Fort Hare in 1966 and an executive member of the NCFS. Stephen Withers was likewise a member of NUSAS, the NCFS and the UCM. BC 586 M1, John Sprack, 'Memorandum: The position at Fort Hare', May 1967, p. 1; A. Egan, *The*

argued, the UCM was, like ASA and ASUSA, a bridge and transitional phase between the multi-racial NUSAS and the exclusively black SASO, the latter established in 1968.²⁴¹ In many respects, the UCM embodied the principles and ideas of the radical, non-racial, though secular student organisation envisaged by Driver at Botha's Hill.

Since 1960, NUSAS had earmarked religious groups as a potential growth area for NUSAS, particularly as they were a possible avenue of entry into the ethnic colleges where organisations such as the SCA were permitted to function. Establishing a radical, non-racial Christian students' organisation was the aim of Basil Moore, NUSAS's 1962 president-elect. What was perhaps the first step towards such a venture occurred in August 1962 when the Rhodes SCA broke away from the national body because the latter's racist organisational structure was incompatible with Christianity. The secessionists subsequently formed themselves into a Students Christian Fellowship²⁴² and hoped thereby to establish firm relations with Fort Hare, UNNE and the Lovedale Seminary.²⁴³ NUSAS saw in the events at Rhodes both an opportunity to broaden its anti-apartheid student base, as well as the first step towards the establishment of a radical Christian student organisation similar to those in the USA associated with the Civil Rights Movement.²⁴⁴ Thus from behind the scenes, NUSAS investigated the possibility of other campus SCAs disaffiliating from the national organisation and together with their Anglican societies, joining the Rhodes initiative.²⁴⁵ However, most campus SCAs were luke-warm if not downright hostile to such a proposal, many fearing, like the bilingual UCT branch which had ties to the Dutch Reformed Church, that contact with Afrikaans-speaking students would be forfeited as a result.²⁴⁶ After being forced to abandon the NUSAS presidency, Basil Moore continued to pursue his aim of establishing a radical Christian student organisation from his position as parish minister on the Rand.²⁴⁷ By 1964, the World Student Christian Federation had adopted an all-embracing anti-apartheid policy and expected the South African SCA to do likewise. The SCA subsequently disaffiliated from the world body, split into racially separate organisations and adopted an exclusive, theologically conservative, evangelical profession of faith.²⁴⁸ Fearing the religious and racial polarisation flowing from this, the English churches facilitated the

politics of a South African Catholic Student Movement, 1960-1987, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, 1991, pp. 36, 38-39.

²⁴¹ A. Brooks and J. Brickhill, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

²⁴² James Gribble via email, 26.11.2014; *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 8, 8.8.1962; *Varsity* vol. 21 no. 15, 8.8.1962; James Gribble to *Rhodeo* vol. 16 no. 9, 15.8.1962.

²⁴³ James Gribble via email, 3.1.2015; BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Derek Bostock, 7.8.1962.

²⁴⁴ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Derek Bostock, 7.8.1962, p. 2; 15.8.1962, p. 3.

²⁴⁵ *ibid.*; BC 586 A2.1, Derek Bostock to Adrian Leftwich, 10.8. [1962].

²⁴⁶ BC 586 A2.1, Adrian Leftwich to Derek Bostock, 7.8.1962; *Varsity* vol. 21 no. 15, 8.8.1962; *Nux* no. 7, 9.8.1962; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 14 no. 16, 10.8.1962; *Dome*, October 1962.

²⁴⁷ BC 586 B4.1, Adrian Leftwich to the Executive, 15.9.1962, p. 2.

²⁴⁸ W.J. Houston, 'A critical evaluation of the University Christian Movement as an ecumenical mission to students, 1967-1972', MTh dissertation, University of South Africa, 1997, pp. 5-7.

establishment, in 1966, of the non-racial ecumenical UCM under the leadership of Moore and the chaplain to the NCFS, Colin Collins.²⁴⁹ Although banned at many black campuses, the UCM very quickly became black-dominated and black-led like the restructured NUSAS envisaged at Botha's Hill. The UCM introduced innovative styles of worship, secular theology and from the USA, Black Theology. Like NUSAS, it also introduced leadership training programmes and a South American-inspired, multi-faceted literacy programme. The literacy programme of Paulo Freire was based on the understanding that true literacy was not just the acquisition of reading and writing skills but entailed 'the construction of the autonomous selves'.²⁵⁰ The role of literacy teachers was to conscientise their learners so that once conscientised, they would work for social transformation.²⁵¹ This political consciousness-raising literacy programme was adopted by the racially exclusive black SASO.²⁵²

Social segregation at NUSAS congresses

One of the reasons for the emergence of SASO was the social segregation prevailing at NUSAS's annual congresses. The staging of a congress on a non-racial basis was an organisational nightmare and virtually impossible to achieve. As the 1960s progressed, university authorities bowed to the state's ever more restrictive social segregatory legislation and were cowed by real and perceived fears of government intervention were they to circumvent or flout these measures. Despite NUSAS's efforts since the late 1950s to avoid this, black students were generally accommodated separately at NUSAS congresses, either in black university residences like Douglas Smit at Wits or Alan Taylor at UNNE,²⁵³ or off-campus at black hotels like the Tafelberg in Cape Town²⁵⁴ or in private homes. In 1958, all congress delegates resided in the Rhodes hostels. However, this remarkable precedent was broken in 1961 when the Rhodes authorities accepted the Eastern Cape Group Areas Board ruling that black delegates to the 1962 NUSAS congress could not be accommodated on the white campus.²⁵⁵ Students at UNNE recommended that NUSAS secure an alternative venue, but without success, Leftwich contending that there was insufficient time (three and a half months) to do so.²⁵⁶ In 1960, the ostensibly liberal Catholic Archbishop of Cape Town, Owen McCann refused to allow black congress delegates to reside in Kolbe House, the Catholic student chaplaincy on the UCT campus, although black NCFS conference

²⁴⁹ J. de Gruchy, *The church struggle in South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1979, pp. 154-155.

²⁵⁰ D. Magaziner, *The law and the prophets: Black consciousness in South Africa, 1968-1977*, Ohio University Press and Jacana, Athens and Johannesburg, 2010, p. 128.

²⁵¹ *ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

²⁵² T. Sono, *Reflections on the origins of Black Consciousness in South Africa*, HSRC, Pretoria, 1993, p. 72.

²⁵³ BC 586 B1, Peter Janisch to Ros ((Traub), 7.10.1960.

²⁵⁴ BC 586 B1, John Shingler to Paul Hartman, 14.12.1959.

²⁵⁵ S. Greyling, 'Rhodes University during the segregation and apartheid eras, 1933 to 1990', MA dissertation, Rhodes University, 2007, pp. 72-3, 95.

²⁵⁶ BC 586 A2.2, Thami Mhlambiso to Adrian Leftwich, 12.3.1962; Adrian Leftwich to Thami Mhlambiso, 19.3.1962.

delegates were permitted to do so.²⁵⁷ After another segregated congress in 1965, Osler called on future convenors to embarrass the relevant university authorities into opening the university residences to all,²⁵⁸ to no avail.

Dining was more straightforward. From at least 1960, and probably before that too, meals, even at Durban,²⁵⁹ were taken on an integrated basis. To ensure that all congress social activities were open to all, NUSAS hosted no official balls after 1947,²⁶⁰ although unofficial non-racial dances were held off campus. However, the new racial laws and restrictions of the mid-1960s took their toll on NUSAS congresses too. The unofficial farewell party at Osler's home in 1965 was raided by the police²⁶¹ while delegates commented regretfully on the 'lack of cohesion' among congress goers because of the obstacles placed in the path of inter-racial social mixing on the UCT campus.²⁶² In May 1967, the Wits SRC overwhelmingly rejected a motion calling for the integration of all campus social functions (though public fund raisers could remain segregated) because the practical implications had not been considered.²⁶³ Moreover, Robin Margo, SRC president, declared that there would be no forced integration at Wits²⁶⁴ echoing the stand of the UP and the conservative wing of the PP. Following the campus outcry led by Neville Curtis, editor of *Wits Student* at what amounted to capitulation to apartheid and the reversal of Wits's traditional policy, the SRC was forced to take their decision to the student body. A student mass meeting voted that all student social functions including rag would be open to all,²⁶⁵ Margo conceding that though very difficult to achieve, integrated social functions were not an impossibility at Wits but would probably be in the future.²⁶⁶

Nonetheless, NUSAS optimistically believed that its 1967 congress at Rhodes would be entirely integrated.²⁶⁷ As is well known, this was not the case. The relevant state authorities refused to countenance an integrated congress and even warned the Rhodes administration that the presence of black students at the congress in itself was illegal.²⁶⁸ The overly cautious Rhodes University Council again bowed to government authority and prohibited black students – forced to reside in unspeakably 'appalling' conditions in a Grahamstown

²⁵⁷ BC 586 B1, John Shingler to Paul Hartman, 14.12.1959; Paul Hartman to John Shingler, 5.3.1960.

²⁵⁸ *Contact* vol. 8 no. 7, July 1965.

²⁵⁹ BC 586 B1, Peter Janisch to Roslyn Traub, 18.8.1960; John Shingler to David Goodhead, 24.10.1960.

²⁶⁰ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1948, pp. 32-34.

²⁶¹ *Varsity* vol. 24 no. 16, 4.8.1965.

²⁶² *ibid.*; *Nux* no. 7, 30.8.1965.

²⁶³ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19 no. 8, 12.5.1967; no. 9, 19.5.1967.

²⁶⁴ M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations 1967*, South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1968, p. 285.

²⁶⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19 no. 9, 19.5.1967, no. 10, 26.5.1967; no. 11, 2.6.1967.

²⁶⁶ *ibid.* no. 11, 2.6.1967.

²⁶⁷ BC 586 B4.1, Margaret Marshall to the Executive, 5.4.1968, p. 2.

²⁶⁸ S. Greyling, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

church²⁶⁹ – from even taking their meals on the campus with the white delegates or attending the traditional opening tea-party there with them.²⁷⁰

An unprecedentedly angry reaction to this insult came from an unexpected quarter, the ultra-loyal chairperson of the UNNE Local NUSAS Committee, Steve Biko. When Biko, an avowed non-racist and political moderate (he rejected Fatima Meer's endorsement of the academic boycott)²⁷¹ took up the reins of the Local Committee in late 1966, he vowed to bring ninety percent of the 1967 freshers into NUSAS²⁷² – a feat he evidently achieved when the SRC was required to hire two buses to transport all the interested UNNE students to the NUSAS Day of Affirmation in Pietermaritzburg in June 1967.²⁷³ Moreover, in an historic first (possibly a reaction to Horwood), the three branches of Natal University decided to break free from their officially imposed structural and racial separation and come (as far as possible) as one Natal delegation to the 1967 NUSAS congress.²⁷⁴ In the words of UNNE SRC president, Baldwin Ben Ngubane (later a member of the *Inkatha* Freedom Party and Minister of Arts, Culture and Science in the Mandela government): 'a united front' demonstrating 'multi-racial efforts and co-operation'.²⁷⁵ Bouyed by such optimism, idealism and goodwill, Biko's reaction to this sordid let-down was not surprising. Censuring the negligence of the NUSAS Head Office for neither alerting delegates of the situation nor finding a new venue for the congress even though they knew sufficiently well in advance to do both, he called for the adjournment of the event until a multi-racial venue could be found.²⁷⁶ These did exist – the Anglican Church had a retreat centre at nearby Stutterheim²⁷⁷ while the Anglican Students' Federation met at the Anglican school, Michaelhouse, in 1967.²⁷⁸ After a five hour debate into the early hours of the morning,²⁷⁹ Biko's motion was defeated, the assembly electing instead to embark on a twenty four hour hunger strike in protest at the racist actions of the Rhodes authorities.²⁸⁰ The NUSAS executive then effectively closed down discussion on social segregation and its culpability in the matter by introducing a motion deflecting responsibility away from itself and pinning fault on the

²⁶⁹ S. Biko, *I write what I like*, Picador Africa, Johannesburg, 2013, p. 12.

²⁷⁰ P. Maylam, 'Rhodes University: colonialism, segregation and apartheid, 1904-1970', *African Sociological Review* vol. 9 no. 1, 2005, p. 19.

²⁷¹ BC 586 M4.3, Steve Biko to Margie Marshall, 16.11.1966.

²⁷² BC 586 M4.1, Steve Biko to John Daniel, 16.11.1966.

²⁷³ BC 586 M4.1, 'Minutes of an emergency SRC meeting of the UNNE held on Saturday, 17 June 1967 at 2.0 pm.'

²⁷⁴ BC 586 M4.1, 'Minutes of SRC meeting held on Saturday 26th May 1967 at 11 am', p. 2; Roger Hulley to Margaret Marshall, 18.6.1967.

²⁷⁵ Ngubane continued: and if the united front worked, Natal would 'capture congress as Adlai Stevenson's young men did with the Democratic Convention in 1960'. BC 586 M4.1, Baldwin Ngubane to Margie Marshall, 12.6.1967.

²⁷⁶ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1967, p. 9.

²⁷⁷ *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 19, 7.8.1968.

²⁷⁸ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1967, p. 40.

²⁷⁹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19 no. 15, 28.7.1967.

²⁸⁰ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1967, p. 9.

university authorities.²⁸¹ While Mzamane *et al* argued that this executive action was motivated by a desire 'to avert an open schism along racial lines',²⁸² Biko argued that it in fact precipitated a division amongst the 'outwitted' black delegates²⁸³ thus weakening their opposition.

The issue of segregation did not go away but rather came to dominate the entire congress.²⁸⁴ After a four hour debate, a strongly worded resolution introduced by Biko rejecting all campus social segregation and censuring any university institution or university structure which practised it, was passed by forty two to two votes with twenty abstentions.²⁸⁵ One of those who abstained, presumably for 'pragmatic reasons', was Margo of the Wits SRC.²⁸⁶ Many black delegates also abstained because they felt that the Biko motion was an empty gesture as it would not be put into effect.²⁸⁷ This demonstrated a growing cynicism amongst black students about the gap between principle and practice in NUSAS.

The recently concluded debate between the presidents of NUSAS and the ASB under conditions of segregation, suggested that for some in NUSAS, dialogue with apartheid-supporting whites was more important than upholding NUSAS's principles and the rights of its black membership. Black students, Biko was warned by Robert Schrire, leader of the UCT delegation, after the former's failed adjournment of congress, ought to be careful not to alienate their white counterparts particularly as NUSAS was attempting to woo students from the Afrikaans-medium universities into the organisation. 'The only road to liberation', Schrire conservatively argued 'was through the persuasion of whites'.²⁸⁸ Regarding the NUSAS-ASB debate then, the student assembly censured Stellenbosch University for hosting a segregated event, but not the NUSAS president for taking part in it. Future debates and contact with the ASB were to be welcomed the assembly ruled, but in a veiled criticism of the executive's conduct, added the proviso that these should not 'breach' any 'tenet of NUSAS policy',²⁸⁹ specifically that of non-segregation.²⁹⁰

²⁸¹ T. Sono, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

²⁸² M. Mzamane, B. Maaba and N. Biko, 'The Black Consciousness Movement', South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 2, 1970-1980*, UNISA Press, Pretoria, 2006, p. 111.

²⁸³ T. Sono, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

²⁸⁴ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19 no. 15, 28.7.1967; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 19 no. 15, 28.7.1967.

²⁸⁵ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1967, pp. 29-30.

²⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁸⁷ *Varsity* vol. 26 no. 8, 9.8.1967.

²⁸⁸ X. Mangcu, *Biko a biography*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2012, p. 124.

²⁸⁹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1967, pp. 40-41.

²⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 41a.

The executive elections were not devoid of controversy. In what radical black students interpreted as an ineffectual gesture aimed at healing the racial wounds of the congress and an attempt by white delegates to salve their guilty consciences, Ben Ngubane of UNNE was elected to the vice-presidency.²⁹¹ Ngubane was subsequently persuaded by students at UNNE to resign his NUSAS office.²⁹²

As has been well documented, the events at the Rhodes congress precipitated a self-interrogation by Biko of the relevance to black students of NUSAS. The 'appalling' accommodation to which black congress delegates had been subjected was evidence to Biko of how little NUSAS valued its black membership.²⁹³ Moreover, Biko and other disenchanted black students questioned whether white students, members of the privileged, oppressive ruling class, who presumed to speak on behalf of black students, could ever really understand and appreciate their concerns and problems. Like other liberal whites, NUSAS activists, it was argued, sought to salve their guilty consciences and prove their non-racism by hosting multi-racial tea parties. These did nothing to further black liberation but served as a palliative to apartheid and held back liberation.²⁹⁴ To add insult to injury, in April 1968, the Pietermaritzburg student body chose the serving of alcohol over the presence of black students at the University of Natal graduation ball.²⁹⁵ Nevertheless, at a NUSAS-facilitated reconciliation meeting between the UNNE and Pietermaritzburg SRCs – the former having severed all ties with the latter²⁹⁶ – Biko staunchly defended both NUSAS and non-racialism.²⁹⁷

The organisers of the 1968 NUSAS congress ensured that there would be no repeat of the fiasco of 1967. John Kane-Berman, president of the Wits SRC (and later of the SAIRR) and son of Torch Commando leader, Louis Kane-Berman, successfully acquired the legal opinion required by the Wits principal, I.D. MacCrone for permitting the congress to be held unsegregated on the campus. Biko was kept minutely informed of these developments through Kane-Berman's specially arranged trips to Natal.²⁹⁸ Thus all congress delegates dined together on the Wits campus inviting the unwelcome observations of the NP press regarding the messiness of the dining hall and the poor attire of NUSAS delegates.²⁹⁹ Black

²⁹¹ *Varsity* vol. 26 no. 8, 9.8.1967.

²⁹² M. Mzamane *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

²⁹³ S. Biko, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

²⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 12; M. Mzamane *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 111, 119.

²⁹⁵ BC 586 B1 Presidential Report, 1968, p. 29; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 20 no. 8, 26.4.1968.

²⁹⁶ BC 586 M4.1, 'Students' Representative Council, the University of Natal, Non-European Section – Minutes of student body meeting held at Alan Taylor Residence on Friday, 3rd May at 8.00 p.m., 1968'.

²⁹⁷ D. Magaziner, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

²⁹⁸ X. Mangcu, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-128.

²⁹⁹ BC 586 B4.1, Sheila Lapinsky to SRC Presidents, Local Committee Chairmen, National Executive, Local Congress Organisers, 'Congress Circular No. 8, 11.6.1968'; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 20 no. 15, 26.7.1968.

students were nonetheless still accommodated separately in a boarding house in Fordsburg,³⁰⁰ the black Wits residence having closed some years earlier due to dwindling black university enrolments.³⁰¹ Heated debate raged throughout the congress about NUSAS's commitment to liberation in general and social integration in particular. Many students argued that non-racial venues were available, like those used by NUSAS for its leadership training seminars, but for convenience as well as whites not being prepared to forego their luxuries of, for example, hot and cold running water, NUSAS chose to host its congresses at the universities. In other words, NUSAS chose practicalities and white privilege and comforts over principles.³⁰² Almost unbelievably considering the fate of 'the flag motion' in 1966 and how distanced white NUSAS delegates appeared to be from white racist society and its symbols, particularly those of Afrikaner nationalism, white NUSAS delegates stood up patriotically to sing the official white national anthem, 'Die Stem', at the conclusion of the formal congress dinner. Biko remained silently seated until the end, after which he too stood up and defiantly sang 'Nkosi sikelel iAfrika',³⁰³ the hymn which would become the national anthem of the future democratic South Africa. For Biko, black students were present at the congress in name only. None felt part of the proceedings and unlike in the past, did not pose a counter challenge to, in Biko's opinion, the continuing rightward movement of the national union.³⁰⁴

Congress delegations from the predominantly white campuses certainly were more conservative than in the past. Following the recently concluded nation-wide referenda on NUSAS affiliation, determined efforts were made to assemble representative delegations who reflected campus opinion.³⁰⁵ Over the next few years, a significant number of white radicals withdrew from or 'dropped out' of formal student governing structures like the SRCs and NUSAS. This was variously attributed to the influence of New Left philosophy, exposure to the horrors of apartheid like the Limehill forced removals of 1969³⁰⁶ and, ironically, participation in NUSAS's highly effective political education and leadership training seminars.³⁰⁷ Nonetheless, despite this growing conservativeness which resulted in NUSAS reflecting a more centrist liberal position,³⁰⁸ the 1968 NUSAS congress did not sell out to the

³⁰⁰ J. Chisholm, *Rand Daily Mail*, reproduced in *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 19, 7.8.1968.

³⁰¹ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1964, p. 17.

³⁰² J. Chisholm, *op. cit.*

³⁰³ Horst Kleinschmidt telephonically, 3.10.2014. Students who attended congresses earlier in the decade do not recall ever singing the national anthem. The idea was preposterous.

³⁰⁴ S. Biko, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

³⁰⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 20 no. 16, 2.8.1968.

³⁰⁶ M. Legassick and C. Saunders, 'Above ground activity in the 1960s', South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa, volume 1, 1960-1970*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004, p. 686.

³⁰⁷ N. Curtis and C. Keegan, 'The aspiration to a just society', H.W. van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds), *Student perspectives on South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1972, pp. 113-114.

³⁰⁸ D. Espey, 'Left, right and centre: what the hell's happened?', *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 22, 3.9.1969.

right. A renewed attempt to limit NUSAS motions to South Africa and exclude international ones related to, for example, Vietnam and Rhodesia, again failed.³⁰⁹ In addition, the assembly debated inviting Kenneth Kaunda and Daniel Cohn Bendit ('Red Danny'), president of Zambia and leader of the student uprising in West Berlin respectively, to address student gatherings in South Africa. However, following the predictable uproar in the NP press that this provoked, NUSAS hastened to assure the public that the invitation to Cohn Bendit was really a joke.³¹⁰ Of more immediate concern, SRCs were urged to register strong concrete opposition to a new assault on academic freedom and university autonomy at UCT.³¹¹

The 'Mafeje affair' at UCT

In April 1968, the UCT Council appointed Archie Mafeje, a former UCT student completing a doctorate at Cambridge University, to a senior lectureship in the Department of Anthropology. Almost immediately, the government indicated its displeasure at what it believed was 'tantamount to flouting the traditional outlook of South Africa'³¹² and the abrogation by the UCT Council of an unwritten agreement that staff at the 'open' universities would be white.³¹³ Evidently under pressure from the *verkrampes* within the NP,³¹⁴ the Minister of Education, warned UCT that should it proceed with the appointment, the government would have no choice but to introduce legislation to ensure compliance, something it was loath to do because it would tarnish the new image it wished to project abroad.³¹⁵ The Council caved in, as they had with the SRC constitution, and did 'the dirty work' of the government.³¹⁶ When this became public, NUSAS urged its SRCs to mount a strong protest against this new assault on academic freedom and the right of the university to decide who would teach.³¹⁷ In response to the call for radical action made by Radical Society member, Rafie Kaplinsky ('Red Rafie'), UCT students marched on the Bremner administration building and occupied it for nine days. This sit-in had all the hallmarks of those in Paris, West Berlin and the USA which had inspired it and of which students felt a part.³¹⁸ Telegrams of support were received from the LSE and the Sorbonne³¹⁹ underlining

³⁰⁹ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 20 no. 16, 2.8.1968.

³¹⁰ *ibid.* no. 15, 25.7.1968.

³¹¹ *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 19, 7.8.1968.

³¹² *ibid.*

³¹³ F. Burrows, 'UCT, student activism and apartheid 1957-1968', BA (Honours) dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2003, p. 59.

³¹⁴ *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 24, 5.9.1968.

³¹⁵ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 20 no.19, 23.8.1968; F. Burrows, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

³¹⁶ *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 20, 14.8.1968.

³¹⁷ *ibid.* no. 19, 7.8.1968.

³¹⁸ R. Bernstein, J. Borkum, N. Jacobson, M. Nkasawe, 'Going for sparrows with machine guns: NUSAS 1966-74', BA (Honours) documentary film, University of Cape Town, 1995.

³¹⁹ M. Plaut, 'Review', 'South Africa: The new radicals: a generational memoir of the 1970s, Jacana Media, Auckland Park 2014', <http://allafrica.com/stories/201409161724.html> accessed 4.10.2014.

the global connections. Civil rights songs were sung and teach-ins conducted³²⁰ – the latter introducing students to Neo-Marxism and New Left concerns of power structures, student power and ‘free love’.³²¹ Country-wide sympathy demonstrations occurred simultaneously. Wits students were pelted with tomatoes, eggs and a dead cat by their counterparts from the Rand Afrikaans University³²² and while the SRC deputation to the Minister of Education in Pretoria escaped injury from the paraffin ‘fire bomb’ intended for it,³²³ its members were captured by students from the University of Pretoria and had their heads shaved.³²⁴ At the request of conservative UCT students, students from Stellenbosch arrived at UCT to storm the hastily barricaded Bremner Building.³²⁵ In the midst of this potentially violent standoff, the sit-in was called off, the protesters accepting an offer by the university authorities to erect a plaque to academic freedom and create a ‘Mafeje visiting fellowship’.³²⁶

The sit-in won the sympathy of the PP and, to the acute embarrassment of the government, received huge publicity and support abroad³²⁷ (the work of NUSAS), effectively destroying the good image it was attempting to project. Vorster denounced sit-ins as ‘communist’³²⁸ and threatened to ‘thoroughly’ put down the UCT protest³²⁹ but was then almost immediately confronted with a protest and a sit-in at Fort Hare.

Fort Hare protest, August 1968

The Fort Hare protests opened up the possibility of continuing and intensifying the nation-wide campus solidarity protests once the Mafeje affair had subsided and perhaps also igniting a nation-wide anti-apartheid student uprising reminiscent of student uprisings abroad. More importantly, the Fort Hare protests presented NUSAS with the opportunity for consolidating the progress it had already made towards re-establishing itself at Fort Hare after its virtual demise following the security clampdown of 1963-65. Thus by 1967, NUSAS could estimate that it had the sympathy of half the Fort Hare student body, though only fifty four were official members of the NUSAS branch. All were senior students, freshers being subjected to sustained indoctrination by the college authorities. As in the past, fear of

³²⁰ *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 24, 5.9.1968.

³²¹ Rick Turner, recently returned from the Sorbonne, introduced students to existentialism and Marcuse. For Jeremy Cronin, the sit-in was a profoundly ‘transformative’ event. R. Erbmman, ‘Conservative revolutionaries, anti-apartheid activism at the University of Cape Town 1963-1973’, BA thesis, University of Oxford, 2005, Chapter 2, http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library/resources/articles_papers/1963_1973_conservative_revolutionaries.htm accessed 20.1.2014.

³²² *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 22, 28.8.1968.

³²³ *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 20 no. 19, 23.8.1968. The fire-bombers were inept. They set their Volkswagen alight.

³²⁴ F. Burrows, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

³²⁵ *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 22, 28.8.1968.

³²⁶ *ibid.* no. 24, 5.9.1968.

³²⁷ *ibid.*; no. 22, 21.8.1968; *Witwatersrand Student* vol. 20 no. 20, 30.8.1968.

³²⁸ *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 24, 5.9.1968.

³²⁹ *ibid.*; *Die Burger*, 17.8.1968.

informers and reprisals by the administration were additional factors deterring NUSAS participation. In 1967, fourteen students (many of them post-graduates) were refused re-admission to the college on the empty grounds of drunkenness, womanising³³⁰ and being of the wrong ethnic group. Amongst these were four members of the NUSAS leadership committee and three ordinary NUSAS members³³¹ and of these some were office bearers in the UCM.

That the new generation of students, products of Bantu Education and indoctrination, were politically cowed was proved wrong in August 1968 with the arrival at Fort Hare of Professor J.W. de Wet, the new rector appointed to succeed the retiring Ross. Reminiscent of the government takeover almost a decade earlier, De Wet - a *Broederbond* ideologue from Potchefstroom and in the opinion of a white staff member, 'a little Nazi' - was greeted on the campus by placards bearing slogans such as 'Fort Hare for Africans not for Afrikaners', 'We do not want Potch boere scum', 'Fort Hare not a rubbish bin for Potchefstroom scum', 'Verwoerd remains cursed' and 'Vorster is identical to Hitler'. De Wet's installation took place against the background of booing and shouting by the student body boycotting the event outside the venue. Those believed to be the ringleaders were hauled before De Wet and were then interrogated by the security police. Greater restrictions were imposed on the social lives of students.

Following a mission by the UCM to Fort Hare in August 1968 in which Biko participated, the student body compiled a list of grievances and demands, including the right to join the UCM. De Wet refused to attend a student mass meeting to answer to these grievances and demands. Against the background of the student revolts at the University of California, Berkley, and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Fort Hare students embarked on a sit-in during which time they sang 'We shall overcome' and the hymn, 'Nkosi sikelel iAfrika'. In other words, students demanded civil rights and liberation in addition to, like student revolutionaries abroad, the democratisation of university structures and an end to authoritarianism. Two days later, the police, armed with tear gas and dogs, intervened and three hundred and fifty students were subsequently expelled.³³²

³³⁰ Aelred Stubbs, principal of the Federal Theological Seminary in Alice believed that following the suppression of militant resistance at Fort Hare, apathy and resentment set in which manifested itself amongst some students in heavy drinking and sexual promiscuity. A. Stubbs, 'Martyr of hope: memoir of hope', S. Biko, *I write what I like*, Picador Africa, Johannesburg, 2013, p. 177. However, most of those refused readmission did not fall into this group.

³³¹ BC 586 M1 John Sprack, 'Memorandum: The position at Fort Hare', May 1967, pp. 1-3; 'Based on questions asked by Research Officer to F. Wilson: 'Expulsions at Fort Hare', nd., pp. 1-2.

³³² BC 586 K7, 'NUSAS Press Digest' no. 1, 1969; *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 24, 5.9.1968; D. Massey, *Under protest: the rise of student resistance at the University of Fort Hare*, UNISA Press, Pretoria, 2010, pp. 192-194; A. Stubbs, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

NUSAS, the Standing Committee and the UCM, responded to the plea for help by the Fort Hare students.³³³ Mass meetings, pickets and demonstrations were held on all NUSAS-affiliated campuses protesting the expulsions and calling for the reinstatement of the affected students.³³⁴ Demonstrations at UCT and JCE were broken up by off-duty naval recruits and students from the Rand Afrikaans University respectively.³³⁵ Convoys of students from Rhodes, Wits, Pietermaritzburg and UCT set off for Fort Hare to seek an interview with De Wet.³³⁶ However, fearing a confrontation with the huge police reinforcements pouring into Alice and the possible banning of both NUSAS and the UCM, the majority of students remained in Grahamstown for a sit-in, leaving a small deputation of NUSAS executive members and SRC presidents to go to Fort Hare. After eventually managing to evade the police, the group, accompanied by staff members from the Federal Theological Seminary, climbed Sandile's Kop and laid a wreath at the memorial to James Stewart, the founder of Fort Hare, to symbolise the death of his vision for the college and in protest at the expulsions of Fort Hare's students.³³⁷ This was a somewhat ritualistic symbolic act reminiscent of NUSAS's Day of Affirmation ceremonies. The NUSAS president was seemingly disappointed at what the national union had achieved at Fort Hare, Biko attributing this failure to the 'rather poor response from the half-committed student world'.³³⁸

Threats of further state action and the retreat of NUSAS

The Fort Hare protest and its linkup with the NUSAS-affiliated campuses was however sufficiently disturbing to the government to goad it into taking further action against students. In the long term this would result in the conferring of full university status on the new ethnic colleges in 1970. By delinking them from UNISA, an institution believed to have a measure of autonomy from Christian Nationalism, the ethnic colleges would be cut off academically, intellectually, socially and geographically from other students, institutions and patterns of thought and totally subsumed into Bantu Education and the world of the Bantustans. As far as the white NUSAS-affiliated student bodies were concerned, the government announced its intention of appointing a judicial commission of inquiry into the white universities and student life.³³⁹ Many believed that this would mark the end of organised student government and NUSAS, their place taken by the sports and exercise classes included in the terms of

³³³ *Die Burger*, 12.9.1968.

³³⁴ *ibid.*; *Cape Times*, 17.9.1968.

³³⁵ *Argus*, 14.9.1968; *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 25, 11.9.1968.

³³⁶ BC 586 K7, 'NUSAS Press Digest' no. 1, 1969, p. 11; *Die Burger*, 12.9.1968; *Cape Times*, 14.9.1968.

³³⁷ BC 586 K7, 'NUSAS Press Digest' no. 1, 1969, pp. 22-27; *Argus*, 14.9.1968; *Cape Times*, 16.9.1968; *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 26, 18.9.1968.

³³⁸ BC 586 M4.3, Steve Biko to Duncan Innes, 8.11.1968.

³³⁹ *Die Burger*, 11.9.1968; *Cape Times*, 12.9.1968.

reference of the commission.³⁴⁰ NP politicians warned too that the student revolts like those overseas would not be tolerated in South Africa. More alarmingly, the issue of segregated student societies raised its head again when Vorster intimated his intention of reintroducing legislation to allow for this.³⁴¹ Already branches of the ASB had been established at Wits³⁴² and Durban in preparation for this change of policy.³⁴³ The withdrawal of the earlier segregatory University Amendment Bill in the wake of the introduction of the new UCT constitution as well as the relieved and surprising discovery that the Prohibition of Political Interference Act of February 1968 which led to the dissolution of the LP was not applicable to NUSAS, had evidently not been a sign of a more tolerant attitude to NUSAS and student politics under the suddenly reformist Vorster.

In December 1968, the NUSAS executive publicly unveiled its plan to establish an 'Action Front'. This was intended to fight and defy Vorster's attempts to legislate social apartheid in the universities as well as to protest the restrictions placed on NUSAS officers in the form of bannings, deportations and passport denials.³⁴⁴ The punitive measures of the latter, used to brilliant effect in silencing the LP and the Congress Alliance, Daniel argued, informed the state's new strategy of cutting NUSAS away from its mass base by deterring potential recruits from taking up leadership positions in the organisation.³⁴⁵ Thus, by the end of 1968, John Sprack, the 1967-8 president-elect had been stripped of his South African citizenship and deported, the 1968 deputy vice-president, Andrew Murray, was also deported³⁴⁶ while John Daniel and Duncan Innes, presidents in 1966-7 and 1968-9 respectively, were refused passports,³⁴⁷ as were Rafie Kaplinsky and Kemal Cassojee of UCT. Rogers Ragaven, a deputy vice-president, was banned,³⁴⁸ as was Professor Raymond Hoffenberg of the UCT Medical School and chairperson of the NUSAS Advisory Board.

NUSAS's defiant protest plan against government harassment of its officers and the implementation of social segregation was stalled in early 1969. In his New Year address Vorster reiterated his warning that the government would not countenance the occurrence of a student revolution in South Africa like those abroad and would accordingly introduce

³⁴⁰ *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 26, 18.9.1968.

³⁴¹ *ibid.* no. 24, 5.9.1968.

³⁴² *ibid.* no. 19, 7.8.1968.

³⁴³ *ibid.*; BC 586 B1 Presidential Report 1968, p. 59.

³⁴⁴ *Die Burger*, 9.12.1968; 12.12.1968; *Argus*, 4.12.1968; 7.12.1968; *Cape Times*, 4.12.1968; 7.12.1968.

³⁴⁵ J. Daniel, 'NUSAS 1963-73: ten years of conflict', *South African Outlook*, January 1974, pp. 12-13.

³⁴⁶ *Cape Times*, 26.11.1968.

³⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 7.12.1968; BC 586 B1 John Daniel, 'Address to NUSAS Congress 1968', p. 1.

³⁴⁸ E.S. Reddy, 'Whose [sic] who ca 1940-1980: biographical notes on Indians in South Africa',

[http://scnc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/B/Ms/Miscellaneous/Biographical Notes On Indian In South Africa By E S reddy.pdf](http://scnc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/B/Ms/Miscellaneous/Biographical%20Notes%20On%20Indian%20In%20South%20Africa%20By%20E%20S%20Reddy.pdf) accessed 17.11.2014.

legislation to outlaw student protest.³⁴⁹ NUSAS and the Standing Committee feared that government propaganda regarding protests would ensure the failure of the militant 1969 campaign by deterring cowed students from participating.³⁵⁰ Thus the NUSAS executive and the Standing Committee successfully sought an interview with S.L. Muller, the Minister of Police, in which the delegation promised to suspend the proposed protest action if government would agree to lift its restrictions on student leaders,³⁵¹ many student leaders proclaiming themselves anti-communist during the course of proceedings.³⁵² NUSAS deliberately ensured³⁵³ that this meeting was hailed in the non-NP press as a breakthrough in government-NUSAS relations which marked the 'dawn' of a 'new era' of 'tolerance' and co-operation between the two parties.³⁵⁴

The left in NUSAS, newly radicalised by exposure to New Left ideology and methods of struggle during the Mafeje and Fort Hare protests, was horrified by this retreat. The Wits Local NUSAS Committee threatened to secede from NUSAS³⁵⁵ and some members actually resigned³⁵⁶ while Kaplinsky and other radicals on the UCT SRC stated that their SRC had no moral right to associate itself with NUSAS's and the Standing Committee's radical change of action without first securing a student body mandate to do so.³⁵⁷ Far more damaging, this incident probably fuelled the desire of black students to establish a separate organisation. Former NUSAS officers interpreted this meeting as the national union having lost its way and further evidence of the organisation's move to the right. To them it seemed shocking that NUSAS officers should 'divorce' the 'minor sufferings' of white students from the real deprivation and oppression experienced by the majority of South Africans and seek 'preferential treatment' for themselves.³⁵⁸

However, it was more complicated than that. It can be inferred that this meeting was the first stage of a sophisticated public relations exercise aimed at convincing students and the

³⁴⁹ *Argus*, 1.2.1969.

³⁵⁰ BC 586 'Appendix D Academic Freedom Protests', Duncan Innes to Overseas National Unions, Overseas Representatives, National Executive, 'Forthcoming protests and background to student activities over the last few months', 1.4.1969, p. 2, <http://www.aluka.org/action/show/Metadata?doi=10.5555/AL.SFF.DOCUMENT.CIR19690401.026.022.000> accessed 10.9.2013.

³⁵¹ BC 586 B4.2, Duncan Innes to SRC Presidents, National Executive, 'Meeting with Muller', 12.2.1969, p. 3. Legassick and Saunders state that this meeting was initiated by the SRC presidents. NUSAS only found out about it from press reports. M. Legassick and C. Saunders, *op. cit.*, pp. 685-686.

³⁵² Horst Kleinschmidt telephonically, 7.10.2014.

³⁵³ BC 586 B4.2, Duncan Innes to SRC Presidents, National Executive, 'Meeting with Muller', 12.2.1969, p. 3.

³⁵⁴ *Argus*, 14.2.1969.

³⁵⁵ M. Legassick and C. Saunders, *op. cit.*, p. 686.

³⁵⁶ Horst Kleinschmidt telephonically, 7.10.2014.

³⁵⁷ *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 1, 5.3.1969.

³⁵⁸ John Sprack, 'Tired of standing on the touchlines: black students breakaway from NUSAS', *Anti-Apartheid News*, October 1970, p. 3, Archives of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS AAM 2200, <http://www.aluka.org/action/show/Metadata?doi=10.5555/AL.SFF.DOCUMENT.AAMP2B2800009> accessed 7.1.2014.

public of the justification of militant protest by demonstrating the futility of putting one's trust in an untrustworthy government and attempting to co-operate and negotiate with it³⁵⁹ – in the words of the UCT SRC president, 'put[ting] the government to the test'.³⁶⁰ As was expected, none of the restrictions were lifted and NUSAS felt no compunction in also breaking its side of the agreement and lifting its moratorium on protests³⁶¹ – vast campus-wide protests marking the tenth anniversary of the passage of the Extension of University Education and Fort Hare Transfer Acts. Legassick and Saunders have suggested that the change of course regarding protest and the visit to Muller was intended to relieve the pressure on Fort Hare.³⁶² This is entirely plausible. In July 1969, black students were to criticise NUSAS for its reactive protest after the fact which merely achieved the victimisation of student leaders at the black colleges.³⁶³

Formation of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO)

Shortly after the conclusion of the 1968 NUSAS congress, Biko attended the UCM conference in Stutterheim. Here again black students, unlike their white counterparts, were subject to apartheid restrictions in the form of the pass laws. Biko convened a separate black caucus to discuss the immediate pass law issue as well as the general needs, concerns and problems of African, Indian and coloured students. After conferring with the remnants of ASA and ASUSA at the various black higher educational institutions, a decision was taken to convene a conference of black student leaders at Mariannhill, Durban (Biko's old school) in December 1968. Though there was growing hostility to NUSAS in some quarters of UNNE³⁶⁴ (notably amongst those aligned to the PAC), Duncan Innes, the 1968-9 NUSAS president, who was well regarded by Biko,³⁶⁵ was kept informed of the latter's plans. In fact, Innes had discussed the conference at the various black campuses during his nation-wide executive visit during the second half of 1968 and offered to share his and those SRCs' thoughts and suggestions for the agenda of the conference.³⁶⁶ There was also a debate as to whether NUSAS should be invited to Mariannhill, though Biko himself thought that the event should be an entirely black affair,³⁶⁷ which it eventually was. The conference, Biko informed Innes, aimed to establish contact with the black ethnic colleges which had been grossly neglected by both UNNE and the 'privileged centres' (presumably the NUSAS affiliates) and that while

³⁵⁹ BC 586 B4.2, Duncan Innes to SRC Presidents, National Executive, 'Meeting with Muller', 12.2.1969, pp. 1-3.

³⁶⁰ *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 1, 5.3.1969.

³⁶¹ BC 586 B4.2, Duncan Innes to National Executive and SRC Presidents, 1.4.1969, p. 2.

³⁶² C. Saunders and M. Legassick, *op. cit.*, p. 684.

³⁶³ BC 586 S21, 'Communique (as drawn up by the 1969 SASO Conference)', nd., p. 3; J. Brown, 'SASO's reluctant embrace of public forms of protest, 1968-1972', *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 62 no. 10, 2010, p. 720.

³⁶⁴ BC 586 M4.3, Duncan Innes to Goolam Abrams, 26.9.1968.

³⁶⁵ BC 586 M4.3, Steve Biko to Duncan Innes, 8.11.1968.

³⁶⁶ BC 586 M4.3, Duncan Innes to Goolam Abrams, 26.9.1968.

³⁶⁷ BC 586 M4.3, Steve Biko to Duncan Innes, 8.11.1968.

'closer [organisational] unity' among black centres would be discussed and would be a desirable result of the conference, this would not replace NUSAS.³⁶⁸ In the event, Mariannhill gave birth to the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) an exclusive black body. Speaking at some length on the origins of SASO, Biko stated that SASO was formed 'under protest'. 'Much as they did not want to form any organisation, this was...discovered to be the only way in which effective contact [with other black centres] could be effected'.³⁶⁹ An exclusive black membership was the means of realising this limited contact. SASO denied that it was formed in opposition to NUSAS. For the purely pragmatic reason that it was proscribed at the black ethnic colleges, NUSAS would have to be by-passed if the envisaged black student contact were to be strengthened and maintained. Thus as Mzamane *et al* argued, SASO was intended to be a kind of black 'pressure group' within NUSAS.³⁷⁰ Relations between NUSAS and SASO remained cordial, NUSAS relaying this information to student unions abroad in April 1969.³⁷¹

Further proof of the necessity for creating a forum for black students outside NUSAS was found in events at the UCON in May 1969. Shortly after being forbidden to hold a meeting expressing sympathy with Fort Hare in August 1968, the Turfloop student body unanimously voted to seek affiliation to NUSAS³⁷² and at the same time elected to shelve its quest for affiliation to ASUSA until more favourable circumstances prevailed.³⁷³ Though this decision was motivated more by a desire to break its isolation and seek contact with other university students rather than any great attachment to NUSAS,³⁷⁴ this was a remarkable step forward for NUSAS and was largely the work of Horst Kleinschmidt, who during his term of office as NUSAS regional director for the Transvaal, increased NUSAS's black representation in the student assembly to almost fifty percent.³⁷⁵ However, not unexpectedly, the UCON Senate refused to countenance any association with NUSAS,³⁷⁶ precipitating a protest march by two-thirds of the student body to the university administration buildings in May 1969.³⁷⁷ Innes and Kleinschmidt attempted to discuss the issue of Turfloop's affiliation with the acting rector, Professor F.J. Engelbrecht, but in vain. After two failed attempts, the two NUSAS

³⁶⁸ *ibid.*

³⁶⁹ BC 586 S21, 'Communique (as drawn up by the 1969 SASO conference)', nd., p. 3.

³⁷⁰ M. Mzamane *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

³⁷¹ M. Maimela, 'Black Consciousness and white liberals in South Africa: paradoxical anti-apartheid politics', DLitt et Phil thesis, University of South Africa, 1999, pp. 142-143.

³⁷² *Varsity* vol. 27 no. 25, 1.9.1968.

³⁷³ C. White, *From despair to hope: the Turfloop experience*, UNIN Press, Sovenga, 1997, p. 102.

³⁷⁴ Horst Kleinschmidt telephonically, 3.10.2014.

³⁷⁵ *ibid.*

³⁷⁶ *Cape Times*, 17.5.1969.

³⁷⁷ Duncan Innes to the National Executive, SRC Presidents, Student Editors, Overseas National Unions, Overseas Representatives, International Organisations, 'Demonstration at Turfloop', 14.5.1969, pp. 1-2, Karis and Gerhart Collection,

<http://www.aluka.org/action/showmetadata?doi=10.5555/AL.SFF.DOCUMENT.iet19690514.026.009.575> accessed 18.12.2013, *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 10, 14.5.1969.

leaders managed to enter the heavily guarded campus, but were immediately threatened with arrest, ordered off the premises by Engelbrecht and issued with a police order banning them from the Pietersburg Tribal Trust Area. In what was reminiscent of the NUSAS executive visit of 1962, their car tyres were slashed outside their hotel in Pietersburg.³⁷⁸

It was probably because of these events that no-one stood in for the ill Duncan Innes, originally invited to attend SASO's inaugural conference at Turfloop in July 1969.³⁷⁹ Despite being banned from the precincts of the campus, the presence of NUSAS representatives at the conference could have placed its staging in jeopardy. Engelbrecht's agreement to the event being hosted and financed by Turfloop and his promotion of SASO,³⁸⁰ was based on the belief that this new black body heralded the longed for break with multi-racial and liberal organisations like NUSAS and the emergence of a student movement organised on apartheid principles. Moreover, SASO's inauguration overlapped with that of the NUSAS congress – the latter a logistical nightmare following the last minute prohibition of its staging at Durban (probably the doing of Horwood)³⁸¹ – making it physically impossible for NUSAS members to be in two places at once.³⁸²

SASO's newly adopted constitution set out its organisation's aims and rationale for existence in pragmatic terms. It aimed to 'represent non-white students nationally' because 'owing to circumstances beyond their control, students at some non-white centres are unable to participate in the national student organisation of this country'.³⁸³ The conference placed much emphasis on facilitating black student contact whether through sport or inter-campus visits in defiance of what they believed was their deliberate state-imposed isolation from one another.³⁸⁴ NUSAS was recognised as the 'true' national union of South Africa, SASO making no claim to such a title itself.³⁸⁵ In his address as newly inaugurated president, Biko stated that SASO's future was dependent on a number of factors, including developments in

³⁷⁸ Clive Nettleton to the National Executive, SRC Presidents, Student Editors, Overseas National Unions, Overseas Representatives, International Organisations, 'Demonstration at Turfloop', 30.5.1969, Karis and Gerhart Collection, <http://www.aluka.org/action/showmetadata?doi=10.5555/AL.SFF.DOCUMENT.iet19690514.026.009.575a> accessed 18.12.2013; *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 12, 28.5.1969; no. 14, 11.6.1969.

³⁷⁹ C. Nettleton, 'Racial cleavage on the student left', H.W. van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds), *Student perspectives on South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1972, p. 128.

³⁸⁰ C. White, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

³⁸¹ *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 15, 18.6.1969. Apparently UNNE was to have hosted the congress, the first time ever, presumably to overcome the accommodation issue. BC 586 M4.1, Clive Nettleton to Ben Ngubane, 3.10.1969.

³⁸² The NUSAS congress was initially scheduled for the 3-11 July at Durban and the SASO conference from 1-3 July. The NUSAS congress was subsequently held at UCT between the 6-14 July (*Varsity* vol. 28 no. 11, 21.5.1969; no.16, 25.6.1969). This shift in date could have been for both logistical reasons and to accommodate students wishing to attend both the NUSAS and SASO events.

³⁸³ G. Gerhart, *Black power in South Africa: the evolution of an ideology*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1979, p. 262.

³⁸⁴ BC 586 S21, '3rd July 1969', pp. 2, 3.

³⁸⁵ S. Biko, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

NUSAS. He predicted a swing to the right on the white NUSAS campuses which would result in either the death of the national union or the virtual exclusion from it of all black students. He urged 'all sensible people', including SASO members, to strive to avert this, but felt that NUSAS's demise was inevitable. Then, he warned, it would fall solely to SASO to cater for the needs of black students and significantly also, to facilitate contact between various colour groups,³⁸⁶ including presumably whites. Thus it would seem that neither overt hostility towards NUSAS nor strident racial exclusivity motivated SASO's formation, at least from Biko's side. It could be argued then that SASO's formation was based on the assumption that NUSAS was a failing organisation in two senses: firstly, as a vehicle for black contact and secondly, as a non-racial forum and students' union. Thus SASO was called into being, in the first instance to cater for the peculiar interests of black students, but once established, would have to position itself to take on the mantle of a non-racial student forum or even a national student union.

Thus in this cordial co-operative spirit, the SASO conference wished NUSAS a 'successful and fruitful congress'³⁸⁷ and mandated the Turfloop delegation at the NUSAS congress to act in SASO's interests there.³⁸⁸

The response of NUSAS to the formation of SASO, 1969-1970

The generosity of SASO towards NUSAS at the former's inaugural conference was not reciprocated by the latter. Although much of NUSAS's senior leadership was sympathetic towards SASO and understood the need for its existence, the 1969 NUSAS congress refused to recognise the separate black organisation,³⁸⁹ two motions to this effect (one proposed by Horst Kleinschmidt and Margaret Broster) being withdrawn.³⁹⁰ Maimela notes that LP members of the NUSAS Advisory Board, Paton, Brookes and Marquard, threatened to withdraw their support for the national union were it to recognise the new black organisation.³⁹¹ For liberals, SASO was a racist movement which played into the hands of the government and by organising separately, betrayed the principle of non-racialism which meant that all races worked together to combat apartheid.

The 1969 NUSAS congress became locked in conflict and not only regarding SASO. White students attacked the NUSAS president for allowing Thami Mazwai, a former Fort Hare

³⁸⁶ BC 586 S21, 'Steve Biko, presidential address contd', nd., p. 3.

³⁸⁷ BC 586 S21, Telegram from SASO to NUSAS Congress, Sovenga, 7.7.1969.

³⁸⁸ BC 586 S21, 'Resolution 7/69 of 3rd July 1969'.

³⁸⁹ N. Curtis and C. Keegan, 'The aspiration to a just society', H.W. van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 116.

³⁹⁰ BC 586 S21, 'Minutes of SASO Executive Meeting, 3-5 December 1969', p. 1; Horst Kleinschmidt telephonically, 7.10.2014.

³⁹¹ M. Maimela, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

student and PAC member recently released from prison, to address student body meetings on various campuses around the country.³⁹² For black students it was clear that many white students would not support their legitimate aspirations for freedom because this would entail supporting the banned liberation movements and in so doing, committing a criminal offence. Moreover, black students who had few if any rights and freedoms could not identify with the outraged reactions of white NUSAS delegates to further inroads into individual freedom enacted by the NP government over the previous year.³⁹³ Black students from UNNE, UCT and TCEA walked out of the assembly hall when a debate on academic freedom and the 'Mafeje affair' reached an *impasse*³⁹⁴ presumably regarding the UCT SRC's climb down and acceptance of a plaque to academic freedom and a visiting fellowship in place of Mafeje's appointment.

The privileged class position occupied by whites in South African society and thus also in NUSAS, came under scrutiny from a separately convened black caucus. In a statement signed by black delegates,³⁹⁵ including NUSAS loyalists and SASO sceptics Ben Ngubane and Goolam Abrams,³⁹⁶ it was argued that 'the white can afford to indulge in conceptualising for he always has access to material sufficiency [whilst] the first priority for blacks is physical existence. The implications of this have been on Congress floor where debates have been initiated on premises arising from white backgrounds'.³⁹⁷ Black students subsequently indicated their intention of withdrawing entirely from NUSAS.³⁹⁸

The challenge posed to NUSAS by its black membership, the perception that NUSAS was little more than a centrist liberal pressure group ignored by the left and right,³⁹⁹ and the complete unravelling of the congress early in its proceedings, convinced delegates of the need to restructure the national union.⁴⁰⁰ The assembly devoted much of its attention to education⁴⁰¹ and adopted a New Left-inspired 'Education '70' national project which aimed at the entire overhaul of university structures.⁴⁰² Some students speculated on the possibility of

³⁹² Maswai received a hostile reception from some UCT students. Subjected to heckling and a barrage of missiles, an upset Maswai warned his audience that 'it is better for you to have me as a friend than an enemy'. *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 6, 6.4.1969; C. Nettleton, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127.

³⁹³ C. Nettleton, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127.

³⁹⁴ *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 18, 6.8.1969.

³⁹⁵ X. Mangcu, *Biko: a biography*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2012, p. 135.

³⁹⁶ BC 586 M4.1, Ben (Ngubane) to 'Dumeri', 31.7.1969. Perhaps 'Dumeri' was Duncan Innes.

³⁹⁷ *Wits Student Souvenir Edition* vol. 36 no. 11, nd., c. 1984, 'NUSAS 60, 1924-1984'; X. Mangcu, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

³⁹⁸ X. Mangcu, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

³⁹⁹ D. Espey, 'Left, right, centre: what the hell's happened', *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 22, 3.9.1969.

⁴⁰⁰ *ibid.*; *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 18, 6.8.1969.

⁴⁰¹ *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 18, 6.8.1969.

⁴⁰² *ibid.*; no. 19, 13.8.1969; no. 20, 20.8.1969.

a restructured NUSAS confining itself primarily to education,⁴⁰³ in other words, a reversion to a conservative, students-as-such position and a retreat from principles.⁴⁰⁴

The restructuring and reorientation of NUSAS in 1970

The new NUSAS president, Neville Curtis, was cast in a different mould to that of many of his predecessors. Coming from a distinctly more humble background than most NUSAS and student activists – he attended a state school, his father started his working life as a miner and became involved in the Springbok Legion and the Labour League⁴⁰⁵ – Curtis used his editorship of *Wits Student* to disseminate his socialist political views and commitment to non-racialism.⁴⁰⁶ Curtis believed that NUSAS was a failing organisation: its ‘morale [was] low, [its] image bad and [its] impact and effectiveness limited’.⁴⁰⁷ If the national union were to survive as a meaningful and progressive entity, it would have to undergo radical transformation. To undertake this daunting task, Curtis and his executive enlisted the help of SASO and, specifically Biko, as well as the UNNE SRC.⁴⁰⁸ SASO was ‘vitaly interested’ in the fate of NUSAS and thus agreed to participate in NUSAS’s reorganisation conference⁴⁰⁹ at the Redacres Catholic Mission in Howick, Natal, in April 1970.⁴¹⁰ Elaborating on his earlier expressed opinion on the growing conservatism of NUSAS (discussed earlier), Biko feared that the reorganisation project could facilitate a right wing takeover of the national union, preparations for which he believed, were already ‘dangerous[ly]’ discernible at Durban and elsewhere.⁴¹¹

Presumably these dangerous preparations stemmed from developments in the Western Cape as well as a widely reported ASB-initiated white co-operation conference at the Rand Afrikaans University in May 1969 attended by Anton Porsig, national chairperson of the ISU and Renier Schoeman, ASB executive member⁴¹² and a leading light in conservative circles at Durban.⁴¹³ After six years of authoritarian college authority and NEUM-induced isolation and political inactivity (after its dramatic opposition to the Republic in 1961), the student body of the University College of the Western Cape (UCWC) (including Jakes Gerwel, later

⁴⁰³ *ibid.* no. 18, 6.8.1969.

⁴⁰⁴ D. Espey, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰⁵ ‘Obituary – Jack Curtis’, <http://www.hnlc.org.au/rensford/curtis.htm> accessed 18.8.2014. This obituary states that Jack Curtis joined the ‘Springbok Labour Party League’.

⁴⁰⁶ X. Mangcu, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-139; G. Moss, *The new radicals: a generational memoir of the 1970s*, Jacana, Auckland Park, 2014, pp. 13, 35.

⁴⁰⁷ G. Moss, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁴⁰⁸ BC 586 M4.1, A. (Tuppy) Mtimkulu to Neville Curtis, 12.6.1970.

⁴⁰⁹ BC 586 S21, ‘Minutes of SASO Executive Meeting, 3-5 December 1969’, p. 4.

⁴¹⁰ G. Moss, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

⁴¹¹ BC 586 S21, Steve Biko to Neville Curtis, 28.11.1969.

⁴¹² *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 11, 21.5.1969; Renier Schoeman to *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 14, 11.6.1969.

⁴¹³ Schoeman was to become Natal NP leader and in the words of Susan Booysen, a ‘diehard Nat among the last of the Nat remnants that eventually joined the ANC, not out of principle but out of desperation for a little place in the ambit of political power’, *Mail and Guardian*, 17.5.2012.

principal of the university and presidential advisor to Nelson Mandela) refused to accept that coloureds comprised a separate 'nation-in-the-making', elected an SRC, attempted to join NUSAS and began to engage with other student bodies.⁴¹⁴ The *verligte* Stellenbosch SRC, freed from its affiliation to the ASB, initiated a dialogue with its coloured neighbour.⁴¹⁵ Though UCWC rebuffed Stellenbosch's 'political missionary' endeavours,⁴¹⁶ white co-operationists at both UCT and Stellenbosch fervently hoped that a federation of the three Western Cape universities, in which, significantly and ominously, a restructured NUSAS would participate, would come into being.⁴¹⁷ Thus, to ensure that NUSAS did not fall into the hands of the conservative co-operationists, Biko urged Curtis to restrict voting on the reorganisation to NUSAS delegates.⁴¹⁸ It was probably for this reason that the NUSAS president believed that the national union might be forced to close down altogether.⁴¹⁹

In preparation for NUSAS's reorganisation conference, SASO's first National Formation School in December 1969 drew up a critique of the national union. NUSAS, it argued, had no long term programme of action. It merely reacted with opportunistic, publicity-seeking protest. Re-iterating its earlier expressed views on the advisability, efficacy and consequences of reactive protest, SASO recommended that these be abandoned. NUSAS was urged to stage 'national days' such as a commemoration of Sharpeville which, through the provision of informative literature, would serve to politically educate students. In addition, extensive self-education of NUSAS members was thought to be a critical priority. NUSAS, SASO believed, ought to develop practical projects like, for example, a literacy programme.⁴²⁰

The reorganisation conference was structured in such a way as to ensure a progressive outcome. Guest participants, in addition to Biko, included Mewa Ramgobin (recently unbanned⁴²¹ and reviver of the Natal Indian Congress in 1971)⁴²² and Rick Turner who introduced student participants to *Satyagraha* (passive resistance) and the relationship between capitalism and apartheid, respectively.⁴²³ In his contribution, Curtis argued that students needed to break free from the shackles of their apartheid socialisation as well as the inflexible strain of liberalism practised in South Africa. They would then have to develop

⁴¹⁴ *Focus* 68 cited in *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 2, 12.3.1969.

⁴¹⁵ *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 18, 13.8.1969; C. Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 74, 75, 77; C. Heymans, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

⁴¹⁶ *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 20, 20.8.1969.

⁴¹⁷ *Varsity* vol. 28 no. 21, 27.8.1969; no. 23, 17.9.1969.

⁴¹⁸ BC 586 S21, Steve Biko to Neville Curtis, 28.11.1969.

⁴¹⁹ G. Moss, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁴²⁰ BC 586 S21, 'Commission on NUSAS reorganisation', 'SASO: Report on the First National Formation School, 1st – 4th Dec 1969, UNB'.

⁴²¹ G. Moss, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁴²² G. Gerhart, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

⁴²³ G. Moss, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

a new consciousness which would allow them to realise their full human potential, act ethically and, through a vehicle like NUSAS, assert their responsibility to society.⁴²⁴ Students had the intellectual responsibility of acquiring knowledge, formulating opinions and disseminating them.⁴²⁵ Evidently influenced by black students' criticism that NUSAS preached non-racialism but many white NUSAS activists rarely put this into practice, Curtis stated that students should 'formulate....a sense of morality....and try to live by it'.⁴²⁶ Their knowledge, intellectual vigour and morality would then be infused in the practical projects and campaigns which they undertook.⁴²⁷

At its annual congress in July 1970 (no longer held at a university campus for reasons of segregation), NUSAS delegates agreed in principle to a radical restructuring of its operations. The national union was transformed into a body composed of a number of smaller, more autonomous entities aimed at effecting real and practical change in peoples' lives. Importantly, the primary responsibility of students was restated in student-in-society terms as that of working for change in society.⁴²⁸

Another issue that required resolution was NUSAS's relationship with SASO. In December 1969, Biko had stated that SASO would not formally affiliate to NUSAS because SASO 'had a specific role to play in non-white interests'.⁴²⁹ However, in May 1970, Biko reopened discussion on this subject with Curtis.⁴³⁰ Curtis reflected that the relationship between the two student organisations should be cordial and based on mutual recognition whether officially or unofficially. He recommended that NUSAS and SASO co-operate closely with one another and where possible embark on joint planning and co-ordination.⁴³¹ This seemed to be coming to fruition in May 1970 when the student assembly was asked to ratify by postal vote, the election of Harry Nengwhekulu, past president of the Turfloop SRC and later a member of the SASO executive, as NUSAS deputy vice-president,⁴³² thus fortifying relations between SASO and NUSAS.

⁴²⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

⁴²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴²⁶ *ibid.*

⁴²⁷ *ibid.*

⁴²⁸ G. Budlender, 'Black Consciousness and liberalism', N. Pityana, M. Ramphela, M. Mpumlwana and L. Wilson (eds), *Bounds of possibility: the legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness*, David Philip and Zed Books, Cape Town, London and New York, 1991, p. 232.

⁴²⁹ BC 586 S21, 'Address by SASO president on: SASO - its role, significance and its future', 'SASO: Report on the First National Formation School, 1-4 Dec 1969, UNB', p. 2.

⁴³⁰ BC 586 S21, Steve Biko to Neville Curtis, 5.5.1970.

⁴³¹ BC 586 S21, Neville Curtis to Steve Biko, 17.6.1970.

⁴³² BC 586 B4.1, Neville Curtis to the Executive, SRC Presidents, Branch Chairmen [sic], 'Re: Postal Motion in Student Assembly in Council', 12.5.1970.

At the 1970 NUSAS congress, Paul Pretorius and Horst Kleinschmidt, the former a new generation Afrikaans-speaking radical from Durban (Durban by then was NUSAS's most radical affiliate probably because of the close ties radical Durban students had with their counterparts at UNNE as well as the influence of Durban political philosopher, Rick Turner), proposed that 'while expressing disagreement with the principle of racial exclusion in any student organisation, [NUSAS] recognises SASO as the body best able to represent the views and needs of black students'. Echoing Curtis's earlier expressed opinion, Pretorius's motion suggested that the NUSAS executive enter into discussions with the SASO executive with a view to establishing maximum contact and co-operation.⁴³³ This almost split NUSAS in two and the motion was hurriedly withdrawn but not before the Wits and UCT delegations had threatened to walk out. Biko did walk out. After an all-night caucus, a compromise was hammered out and accepted by the student assembly. This read that SASO was 'well able' rather than 'best able' to represent the interests of black students.⁴³⁴ Though objections to the first motion by, for example, Wits SRC president, Ken Costa (an evangelical Christian and PP activist who mounted a one-person demonstration to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Sharpeville⁴³⁵) were probably based on a defence of non-racialism or multi-racialism (the two terms were by then used inter-changeably) and a rejection of organised racial exclusivity on apartheid lines,⁴³⁶ it was the patronising attitude of white student leaders who presumed, probably unconsciously, that they had the right to permit SASO to exist that offended black students and some of their white sympathisers.⁴³⁷ In the opinion of white SASO sympathisers, the 'best able' debate marked the final parting of the ways between NUSAS and SASO and demonstrated a substantial failure on the part of NUSAS congress goers to appreciate the feelings and concerns of black students.⁴³⁸

However, even before this fateful congress, the substantial degree of co-operation between the two student presidents – which even included a request to NUSAS for its inputs regarding the subject matter to be discussed at SASO's annual congress and the content of its working papers⁴³⁹ – appeared to be coming to an end. In May 1970, against the background of the national student strike in the USA precipitated by the shooting of students at Kent State, Ohio by the National Guard as well as US military aggression in South East Asia, NUSAS embarked on a campaign to protest the serial detention under the Terrorism Act of twenty two ANC/Congress-aligned activists (including Winnie Mandela, wife of

⁴³³ Horst Kleinschmidt telephonically, 7.10.2014; X. Mangcu, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-144.

⁴³⁴ X. Mangcu, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

⁴³⁵ G. Moss, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 8, 9.

⁴³⁶ Horst Kleinschmidt telephonically, 7.10.2014; X. Mangcu, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

⁴³⁷ X. Mangcu, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

⁴³⁸ *ibid.*

⁴³⁹ BC 586 S21, Steve (Biko) to Neville (Curtis), 24.5.1970.

incarcerated Nelson Mandela) accused of attempting to re-establish the ANC. In defiance of the chief magistrate's prohibition, Wits students and staff marched to John Vorster Square, the headquarters of the infamous security police, and demanded that the detainees held there be either charged or released. The mass arrest of more than three hundred and fifty participants received much publicity and whetted students' appetite for further action.⁴⁴⁰ Believing that white students had demonstrated the ability 'to disturb the unquestioned exercise of the state's legal and extra-legal powers', NUSAS decided to capitalise on this and invited other student organisations, including SASO, to join it in sustained protest. SASO angrily rejected this proposal. Biko objected to white students presuming to speak and act on behalf of the black majority and presuming to lead the struggle against racial oppression, thereby denying black agency.⁴⁴¹ Not long after this, NUSAS discovered that it was no longer welcome to observe the July 1970 SASO conference.⁴⁴²

Although not mentioned, these events were perhaps additional factors motivating the 1970 SASO conference to pass a motion that 'the commitment of white students to the principles of NUSAS was limited to a few individuals' and that in its 'principles and makeup', NUSAS 'can never find expression for the aspirations of black students'.⁴⁴³ At the same time, the term 'Non-White' was denounced as negative and replaced with the positive term 'Black',⁴⁴⁴ and a motion passed urging SASO to establish contact with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, the student organisation championing the Black Power movement that was then sweeping the USA.⁴⁴⁵ These decisions signified a shift in the thinking of black students. Until then SASO adherents were still attached to non-racialism and felt uneasy about their organisation moving against that spirit. Moreover, SASO initially made little headway at Fedsem⁴⁴⁶ and Fort Hare where residual ASA and ANC attachment remained.⁴⁴⁷ Even at SASO's UNNE birthplace, where PAC activist and Biko confidante, Aubrey Mokoape, pushed a strong racially separatist nationalist line,⁴⁴⁸ Ben Ngubane could claim during the second half of 1969 that opposition to 'my local fascists' (SASO) was so strong that he had merely to 'pack a hall' with coloured and Indian students to get a motion of centre affiliation to SASO kicked out'.⁴⁴⁹ However, this opposition began to dissipate with the

⁴⁴⁰ J. Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 718-719; G. Moss, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-28.

⁴⁴¹ J. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 719.

⁴⁴² BC S21, Neville Curtis to Steve Biko, 17.6.1970.

⁴⁴³ BC 586 S21, 'Resolutions adopted at the First SASO General Students' Council, July 4th-July 10th, 1970', pp. 2-3.

⁴⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 14; G. Gerhart, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-278.

⁴⁴⁵ BC 586 S21, 'Resolutions adopted at the First SASO General Students' Council, July 4th-July 10th, 1970', p. 7.

⁴⁴⁶ P. Denis, 'Seminary networks and Black Consciousness in the 1970s', *South African Historical Journal* vol. 62 no. 1, 2010, p. 168.

⁴⁴⁷ D. Massey, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-210.

⁴⁴⁸ X. Mangcu, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁴⁴⁹ BC 586 M4.1, Ben (Ngubane) to 'Dumeri', 31.7.1969.

understanding that 'Black' was defined non-rationally (the contribution of ASA) to indicate all ethnic groups oppressed by apartheid and racial domination.

Critiques of liberalism as the cloak of white privilege were already current amongst black students, but at the same time, white radicals, influenced by the continuing world-wide student revolts also discussed the poverty and limitations of liberalism as an ideology and an organising strategy. In August 1970, SASO mounted a devastating demolition of liberalism and liberals ('liberal' defined broadly by SASO as any white opposed to the NP, including UP adherents⁴⁵⁰), the latter that 'curious bunch of non-conformists' and 'do-gooders' who claimed to have 'black souls wrapped up in white skin'.⁴⁵¹ The idea that South Africa's problems could be solved through a 'bi-lateral approach' of black and white operating together was rejected as were too non-racial student organisations like NUSAS, which 'insist[ed] on integration not only as an end goal but also as a means'.⁴⁵² Multi-racial, integrated bodies, it was argued, entrenched both white domination and black feelings of inferiority. 'Integration' meaning black assimilation into white society on a basis of established white norms was rejected as was too the imposition of an 'entire set of values' on 'indigenous people' by a 'settler minority'.⁴⁵³ Racism was not a 'black problem' but a white problem, a problem of which liberals were a part. The role of a 'true liberal', SASO asserted, was to fight for justice within white society and educate it for the possibility of life in a social order where colour was irrelevant.⁴⁵⁴ This accorded with one of the subsidiary roles of a restructured NUSAS conceptualised by Driver at Botha's Hill.

Not surprisingly given this trenchant critique of NUSAS and integration, SASO broke off all ties with the national union and other multi-racial bodies in 1971.⁴⁵⁵ This, and the increasing acceleration of black students out of NUSAS (UNNE disaffiliated in 1971⁴⁵⁶), was a devastating blow to NUSAS. However, the 1971 NUSAS assembly reluctantly accepted this separation and passed a resolution by forty two to sixteen with nine abstentions affirming its commitment to remaining open to all students but accepting that it would play no role on the black campuses unless requested to do so by SASO or any of SASO's affiliated student bodies.⁴⁵⁷ From then on, a small core of NUSAS activists, many of whom embraced Marxism, participated in a range of New Left-inspired educational, cultural, social-action and

⁴⁵⁰ M. Maimela, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁵¹ S. Biko, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁴⁵² *ibid.*

⁴⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁵⁵ G. Gerhart, *op. cit.*, pp. 265, 267.

⁴⁵⁶ BC 586 M4.1, C.D.T. Sibisi to 'The President', 24.3.1971.

⁴⁵⁷ BC 586 B1 Congress Minutes 1971, pp. 6-7.

later labour programmes,⁴⁵⁸ not as the 'instruments of change', but on the understanding that they were 'instrumental to change generated elsewhere'.⁴⁵⁹ In reaction to SASO's and the Black Consciousness Movement's preoccupation with race and identity, NUSAS increasingly focussed on class. Building on the programme begun in the late 1960s of investigating the wages of campus workers, NUSAS established Wages Commissions as a means of facilitating the unionisation of black workers, what Lunn argues was akin to the student-worker alliance of the Paris student uprising of 1968.⁴⁶⁰

In terms of its explicitly political aim, its community-orientated programmes and the abrogation of a leadership role for white students, NUSAS's restructuring was a response to SASO but could also to some extent be seen as the implementation of the Botha's Hill proposals. The Botha's Hill proposals themselves prefigured the thinking on which SASO was based. Other similarities and links between NUSAS and SASO existed. Black and white students were part of the same generation. All had lived their entire lives under apartheid and were conditioned by it and from the late 1960s some were influenced by the ideas of the New Left. SASO assimilated New Left ideas regarding psychological and cultural liberation and consciousness.⁴⁶¹ Its important vehicle for the development of a political consciousness, the Literacy Programme, traced its lineage back to the UCM but had similarities to NUSAS's Transkei Literacy Project. NUSAS's important political education and leadership training vehicle, the national and regional seminars, were adopted by SASO, again via the UCM, as its 'formation schools'. Through these, both NUSAS and SASO groomed students for a political leadership role in the communities and professions they entered after graduation. Both NUSAS and SASO were committed to the creation of a new South African society not founded on race, though NUSAS, unlike SASO, was committed to non-racial means of achieving this. Nonetheless, SASO's definition of 'black, was non-racial in the sense that it included Africans, Indians and coloureds.

Conclusion

By the end of 1969 NUSAS found itself in a similar situation to that of 1964. The establishment of SASO in 1968, like that of ASA and ASUSA at the beginning of the decade, threatened NUSAS with the loss of its entire black membership. Thus it became imperative that NUSAS restructure and re-position itself, though, unlike in 1964, not so as to retain its

⁴⁵⁸ I. Macqueen, 'Re-imagining South Africa: Black Consciousness, radical Christianity and the New Left, 1967-1977', PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2011, pp. 71-73.

⁴⁵⁹ N. Curtis and C. Keegan, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

⁴⁶⁰ H. Lunn, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

⁴⁶¹ C. Halisi, 'Black Consciousness philosophy', N. Pityana, M. Ramphela, M. Mpumlwana and L. Wilson (eds), *Bounds of possibility: the legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness*, David Philip and Zed Books, Cape Town, London and New York, 1991, pp. 107-109; I. Macqueen, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-73.

black membership but rather as a *de facto* white organisation working in meaningful and practical ways towards a new non-racial South Africa in some kind of partnership with, or under the leadership of separately organised black students. How had this come about? The state continued its assault on NUSAS in the hope of mortally weakening it. Social segregation became a weapon for right wing groups such as conservative societies - whether proxies of the state or not - to challenge NUSAS and its principles. Moreover, through the threat of a further loss of university autonomy and state subsidies, the government intimidated university authorities into implementing campus racial segregation and in so doing opened up an additional hostile front against NUSAS and its affiliated SRCs. In the face of the rising security state, the disappearance of internal black opposition, increasing white economic prosperity and the threats posed to white rule beyond South Africa's borders, the white electorate moved to the right, further consolidating NP power. So too did NUSAS's mass student base as demonstrated by the nation-wide disaffiliation bids of 1968. Thus the necessity for pursuing a policy which was realistic and possible within the political and security climate of the time became increasingly evident. To prove its respectability, NUSAS increasingly claimed to be upholding Western values and democracy,⁴⁶² something its leadership had carefully refrained from doing during the radical early 1960s when it wished to identify with anti-colonialism and Cold War non-alignment. NUSAS moved slowly and inexorably away from a 'student-in-society' orientation towards that of a 'student-as-such' one. Instead of concerning itself with liberation as it had increasingly done during the early 1960s, NUSAS focussed on education in general and the universities in particular. Elaborate pageants affirming its commitment to academic freedom were staged. So as to meet the demand of its student membership for white co-operation, NUSAS exploited the increasingly obvious divisions within the Afrikaner Nationalist student world by seeking dialogue with the ASB and NP-inclined student bodies, sometimes in the process abrogating its non-racial principles. This was not lost on NUSAS's black membership. Coupled to this was the national union's failure to put into practice its continuously stated rejection of social segregation and find alternative congress venues no matter how impractical, uncomfortable and inconvenient this was to white delegates who took their comforts for granted.

While NUSAS attempted to steer a course congruent with the realities of the South African situation, so too did black students. Realising that the state intended that they remain

⁴⁶² For example, John Daniel stated that Kennedy's Day of Affirmation speech demonstrated that NUSAS's 'hopes and ideals were part of the great traditions of the contemporary Western world'. Cited in H. Lunn, *op. cit.*, p. 74. At UNNE in 1966, NUSAS was averred to be upholding the 'principles of Western democracy'. BC 586 M4.3, 'Report on Mr John Daniel's Executive Tour during the 1st week in March', 'Minutes of the UNNE Local Committee meeting held on 22nd March 1966 in Common Room in Alan Taylor Residence'.

permanently isolated from one another and that students at the ethnic universities would never be permitted to affiliate to NUSAS, black students took the practical decision to establish their own racially separate student body which would both facilitate contact between black students and address their peculiar needs, needs different to those of white students. SASO was thus established not to replace NUSAS but rather as a separate black caucus within NUSAS. Black students remained committed to non-racialism and were thus reluctant to embrace a racial separatism which seemingly accorded to apartheid. The refusal on liberal grounds of many within NUSAS to either accept or understand the need for SASO, combined with racial assertiveness tendencies within SASO and its adoption of Black Power, led to the revocation of SASO's recognition of NUSAS as South Africa's national student organisation.

Ironically, this occurred against the background of the growing radicalisation of some politically active, mainly white students influenced by the 1968 student revolts and the rise of the New Left. NUSAS's decision to mount a series of demonstrations against detention without trial in 1970 was an anathema to SASO because these were reckless and would only court retaliatory action against black students. Moreover, they were premised on white arrogance and the assumption that whites would lead the struggle.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Conclusion

SASO's indictment of NUSAS, its liberalism, its policy, its membership and much of its leadership was a devastating blow to the national union from which it never fully recovered. In 1970, the end point of this study, it was quite clear that it was only a matter of time before NUSAS would revert to being the almost wholly white student organisation it was in 1956, the starting point of this thesis. That it was possible to retain in one organisation privileged white students wedded to the political *status quo* together with radical black students clamped down in the rural reserves proved false in the late 1960s when racial separation and apartheid authoritarianism were reaching their zenith.

This study has attempted to demonstrate how NUSAS successfully crafted a sophisticated, broad-based, national and international campaign against university apartheid founded on the tactically inclusive but limited defence of academic freedom and the autonomy of the university from state interference. The return of Fort Hare to NUSAS on the eve of the introduction of the Separate University Education Bill into parliament was a triumph for NUSAS and the united front it was endeavouring to construct. Henceforward, it could quite legitimately claim to speak on behalf of both black and white students in expressing its opposition to government educational apartheid measures. Though Fort Hare returned to NUSAS for tactical reasons – to be associated with a powerful, well-resourced, ruling class organisation which had a chance of thwarting government plans – it was argued that events in wider society also had a bearing on this decision. The ANC – much weakened by security legislation, bannings and the Treason Trial – was shedding much of its assertive African nationalism and calling for a non-racial united front of all those opposed to apartheid.

The presence of Fort Hare in NUSAS forums and the hope that other black centres would re/affiliate necessitated that the national union assume a more activist political orientation. For this purpose, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted as the foundation of future policy. The wide international endorsement of the Declaration, together with NUSAS's deliberate efforts to downplay the document's commitment to a universal franchise and second generation socio-economic rights ensured that even NUSAS's most conservative affiliates, Durban and Rhodes, accepted this as the basis of their policy. The near impossible was achieved for a time: bringing together radical black

and apolitical and conservative white students in one organisation in a common commitment to a democratic education in a democratic society.

NUSAS drew closer to the Congresses. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights echoed the demands of the Freedom Charter, a document which only two years earlier NUSAS had rejected on the grounds of its overly political nature. Liberal abhorrence of unconstitutional methods of struggle waned somewhat, NUSAS electing to defy the provisions of the 'church clause' of the Native Law Amendment Act, a measure which even more than university apartheid threatened the organisation's continued existence as a non-racial forum. As university apartheid loomed menacingly closer, and prompted by its enlarged black constituency, NUSAS abandoned the tactically expedient but morally bankrupt defence of university autonomy as the basis of its academic freedom campaign. The equally ethically ambiguous anomaly of upholding a colour blind admissions policy at Wits and UCT while at the same time maintaining a social colour bar was also called into question, found wanting and ultimately rejected. From henceforth, as was demonstrated, NUSAS and its SRCs embarked on a campaign of total campus desegregation. This was a somewhat futile and symbolic gesture as black students would in any event disappear from the previously open universities following the implementation of the 1959 legislation. NUSAS moved further along the road of defying apartheid measures. It actively endeavoured to facilitate the enrolment of as many black students as possible at Wits and UCT before their racial closure and set-up SACHED as an alternative to the new apartheid colleges. As was argued, NUSAS controversially attempted to provoke crises at these new institutions as a prelude to rendering them unworkable. NUSAS's efforts at securing, or in the case of Fort Hare, retaining a presence at the ethnic colleges meant that NUSAS leaders forged a close working relationship with the banned and semi-legal Congresses, a radicalising experience.

Sharpeville marked a turning point in NUSAS's history. These events which fleetingly appeared to mark the demise of white rule in South Africa - like in the rest of the decolonising continent - and which led to the banning of the ANC and PAC, set NUSAS on a path towards full participation in the liberation struggle and away from the world of the predominantly white universities and their preoccupations. Along with the ANC, remnants of the Congress Alliance and the LP, NUSAS called for a national convention to deliberate a new dispensation for a democratic South Africa. Though the national convention was endorsed by NUSAS's affiliates – often because of its association with anti-republicanism with which many white English-speakers identified – much of NUSAS's white membership became more conservative after Sharpeville. White fears in the wake

of Sharpeville spawned a white co-operation movement which challenged the hegemony of the national union. At the same time, new exclusively black student groupings (ASA, ASUSA and PNSO) emerged aligned to the banned liberation movements which threatened NUSAS with the loss of its black membership.

The university experiences of black and white students, as well as their political aspirations, diverged even more sharply as the 1960s progressed. As university apartheid became a reality, fewer students at the formerly open universities had direct experience of racially open institutions and fewer felt the need to fight for these. Most black students were involuntarily cloistered in physically isolated, oppressive apartheid colleges. Many believed, as attested to by the views of those enrolled at the UCON, that students should play a leading role in the struggle for liberation and that student unions should adapt accordingly. The ever-radicalising NUSAS leadership aligned itself with the aspirations of its black membership, with potentially detrimental consequences for the national union's continued existence as a mass organisation.

NUSAS continued to inch closer to what remained of the Congresses. To identify more closely and win credibility with them, a number of measures were taken. Albert Luthuli was elected as NUSAS's honorary president while the Indian Youth Congresses were invited to participate in NUSAS forums, providing these marginalised groups a platform to express their views as well as an opportunity to influence the direction of NUSAS policy. The controversial 'degrees motion' was an attempt to appease the demands of ANC-aligned SACHED students that NUSAS endorse the academic boycott proposed by the AAM, a movement from which NUSAS was officially dissociated. Re-establishing links with the East-bloc aligned IUS was motivated by a desire to meet the demands of NUSAS's radical black membership as well as the recognition that to consolidate relations with student unions on the rest of the African continent, it would be necessary to adopt their non-aligned international orientation. For similar reasons, as it was argued, NUSAS endorsed Pan-Africanism and by implication the transfer of power to the black majority, a universal franchise and Africanisation. NUSAS's practical programmes such as the Transkei literacy project and CADET were potentially revolutionary political education and development programmes influenced by events at Fort Hare, the political uprising in the Eastern Cape and developments abroad. Defence and Aid and the Prison Education Scheme were intended to aid students engaged in political activity – an explicit alignment with the banned liberation movements.

The banning of the liberation movements, the construction of a police state after Sharpeville and the virtual demise of ASA in the wake of the security crackdown of 1963-4 led black students increasingly to view NUSAS as a potential vehicle for their political aspirations. At the same time however, it was clear to NUSAS that the desire for black separatism had not abated. Hence, as it was demonstrated, NUSAS grappled with the almost unsolvable problem of how as a predominantly white organisation it could play a meaningful role in the liberation struggle, Africanise its membership and leadership while simultaneously retaining its commitment to non-racialism. As was shown, it was the recommendation by the Dar es Salaam Seminar of 1964 that NUSAS be barred from all continental and global student forums because, in its racial composition, it could not reflect the aspirations of the black majority that precipitated the radical interrogation of NUSAS's structure and goals at the Botha's Hill Seminar of April 1964. The seminar rejected the proposal that NUSAS reconstitute itself into the student wing of the liberation movements (the ANC) – in effect transform itself into a non-racial ASA. It rejected too Driver's far-reaching reformulation of non-racialism and African leadership, that those who were the most oppressed because of their race should take a leadership role, a reformulation, it was argued that prefigured that of SASO's. The seminar elected instead to retain NUSAS's colour blind definition of non-racialism. NUSAS, the seminar accepted, had a 'radical role' as an agent of change, a facilitator of the unity of the liberation movements and a provider of leadership training. One of its minor functions was the political education of white students and their preparation for life under a future black government, a role that was later assigned to it by SASO.

The desire for an effective role in the liberation movement, one of the reasons for the convening of the Botha's Hill Seminar, together with the failure of conventional methods of struggle in dismantling apartheid was, it was argued, the motivation too for some current and former NUSAS leaders accepting recruitment into the ARM. The ARM disclosures and the leading role played in the organisation by students, together with the explosive and deliberately distorted Botha's Hill proposals, provided potent ammunition to NUSAS's enemies. The state and its allies, the new campus conservative societies, used these political windfalls to slice-away from NUSAS its conservative white student membership, some of it already alienated by the radical direction of NUSAS policy and softened up by Vorster and the right wing's 1963-4 smear campaign. Through a system of tight management, NUSAS survived what was arguably the most serious crisis of its forty year existence. However, the national union was substantially weakened, and, more critically, rendered directionless in the process. Of necessity, it was forced to abandon any pretensions it might have had of being a liberation movement and diluted its radical

role. As it was argued, NUSAS retained its commitment to the pursuit of human rights but this commitment was predicated on a more realistic anti-apartheid programme given the authoritarian environment in which it was forced to operate. Increasingly, NUSAS came to focus on issues affecting the university rather than those of wider society. NUSAS reaffirmed its commitment to working towards the restoration of academic freedom and for this purpose inaugurated both national and campus Days of Affirmation of Academic and Human Freedom. Despite the fact that these ritualistic and symbolic occasions posed little threat to the security of the state, the 1966 Day of Affirmation resulted in the banning of the NUSAS president, Ian Robertson under the Suppression of Communism Act. By this measure, the government hoped to intimidate NUSAS and deter its keynote speaker, US presidential candidate, Robert Kennedy from coming to South Africa as the guest of an allegedly 'communist' organisation.

The state continued its assault on NUSAS, by then one of the most radical organisations still operating legally in South Africa, despite its retreat into a more students-as-such position. The government also directed its attention to social integration at the English-medium universities. For this purpose, it utilised not only the campus conservative societies but also the university authorities, the latter threatened by the loss of their state subsidies and further inroads into their autonomy should they fail to comply. University principals attempted to weaken NUSAS by persuading student bodies, through increasingly coercive means, to abandon their automatic affiliation to NUSAS. Following the failure of the UCT CSA to transform itself into an officially white body, the government introduced the University Amendment Bill prohibiting racially open campus societies, including by implication, NUSAS. The Bill was only withdrawn when the UCT Council imposed a new racist constitution on the SRC.

It was the application of full social segregation by the Rhodes Council on the 1967 NUSAS congress, and the failure of NUSAS to find an alternative venue in the face of expectations that it had raised of hosting a fully integrated event that precipitated the black student break with NUSAS. Though, as argued, SASO was not founded in opposition to NUSAS, but rather as a forum for black students prevented from participating in the national union, the events at Rhodes set in place much soul-searching amongst NUSAS's black membership about the national union and their place within it. Black students questioned whether the commitment of NUSAS members to non-racialism went beyond mere words and whether non-racialism was the most effective means of challenging apartheid. Moreover, they pondered whether the white-dominated NUSAS, with its focus on white student issues and academic freedom, the latter a luxury of which

black students in their authoritarian university colleges had no experience, was relevant to their particular needs. Nonetheless, as it was argued, much of SASO's membership had no wish to see the demise of NUSAS or its takeover by conservatives and accordingly, some of its leadership actively assisted in the national union's restructuring. By the end of 1970, NUSAS had committed itself to working actively for change and returned to a student-in-society approach.

Student politics is by its nature a limited form of political engagement. It is concerned with education, universities, student welfare and other issues of importance to students. A student organisation which operates within the limited framework of student politics enjoys many advantages. These include a platform for propounding its views, a potentially large membership, access to the organs of student government and to the financial and material resources these control as well as, above all, legitimacy. An organisation regarded as legitimate by a large number of students, the university authorities as well as perhaps wider society can be powerful and effective, even, as NUSAS discovered, to the point of being free to engage in some limited form of political activity not necessarily fully supported by its membership. Many students were severely critical of NUSAS during the mid-1960s. Nonetheless they regarded NUSAS's existence as legitimate and were prepared to come to its rescue when it came under attack, demonstrated for example by the thousands who rallied to NUSAS's cause (including the Wits Conservative Club) following the banning of Ian Robertson. Likewise, the UP came to NUSAS's defence following Vorster's 1963 smear campaign. A student organisation which moves outside the confines of student politics and engages with wider society and its political concerns risks forfeiting its legitimacy as well as its campus-based advantages. NUSAS was fully cognisant of this when it deliberated its restructuring and re-orientation at Botha's Hill. For this reason, it decided against switching immediately to individual enrolment because in so doing it would transform itself into a small, marginal and probably weak and impecunious activist organisation cut off from the vast majority of students as well as their well-resourced SRCs. Activist organisations risk alienating university authorities. Even the relatively benign Fort Hare missionary authorities would not countenance the launch of PSASU on their campus in the mid-1950s while few universities tolerated the existence of overtly political student societies or campus branches of national political parties. During the 1960s, university vice-chancellors and principals signalled their disapproval of NUSAS's policy by declining the national union's honorary offices customarily bestowed on them as well as working actively towards weakening the organisation.

SASO at its establishment was a non-militant organisation focussed largely on student issues. This, together with its seeming acquiescence to apartheid and its disavowal of the white liberal NUSAS, won it the approval of the ethnic college authorities who permitted it to organise on their campuses, and, in some instances, even provided it with financial and material assistance to aid its growth. When SASO emerged from its docility and challenged firstly educational apartheid and then the entire system of racial domination, it was proscribed on the campuses and its leaders expelled. Ultimately it faced the full wrath of the state. Like the office-bearers of ASA, ASUSA and PSNO a decade earlier, SASO leaders were banned, imprisoned, tortured and charged with treason, while some like Steve Biko and Abram Tiro were brutally and cold-bloodedly murdered. This could perhaps have been the fate of NUSAS and its leadership too had the organisation continued on the radical political course it had embarked on in 1963-4. The LP was effectively immobilised by bannings and prohibitions even before its dissolution in the wake of the passage of the 1968 Prohibition of Improper Political Interference Act, a measure which was originally applicable to NUSAS when it was first mooted in 1965. That NUSAS and its officers were not banned, it could be argued, was because of the organisation's retreat from radical political engagement to a more student and university-focussed approach. For this reason, it still enjoyed a significant degree of student and campus legitimacy. Moreover, it could be argued that NUSAS's privileged, white middle class membership offered the national union and its officers a degree of protection from state harassment. The government, it could be surmised was hesitant to take action against an organisation representative of a powerful section of the ruling class. Maimela has argued that the mutually dependent relationship which existed between SASO and white liberal organisations was driven from SASO's side not only by a desire to access these organisation's superior resources but also the degree of protection from state harassment that an association with such ruling class bodies afforded. Thus, in the security state environment of the 1960s, NUSAS had little choice but to limit the scope of its activities and retreat into a 'students-as-such' position.

Circumventing social segregation was exceptionally difficult after 1965, particularly for very public events like NUSAS congresses. However, NUSAS too readily accepted this situation and shifted responsibility to the state and the university authorities for its failure to put its commitment to non-racialism into practice. Already in 1962, black students had requested that a new venue be found for the annual congress when it was discovered some months beforehand that it would be a segregated affair. This was rejected as entirely impractical. The price that NUSAS paid for placing practicalities above principles

and limiting its political engagement to the universities (white mainly) was the loss of its black membership.

Nonetheless, despite its compromises, NUSAS's vision of a new apartheid-free South Africa remained as clear as ever. Though the mass protests, demonstrations, sit-ins and confrontations between NUSAS's affiliated student bodies and their university authorities in the latter half of the 1960s were propagated in defence of academic freedom and students' rights, they were still protests against the prevailing racial order, and, being inspired by New Left student radicalism sweeping the northern hemisphere, indicated that NUSAS had the potential to play a far more meaningful role in the general struggle against apartheid. Moreover, even in the face of extreme pressure and a campus-wide disaffiliation movement, NUSAS refused to abandon either its denunciation of white minority rule in Rhodesia or its endorsement of the actions of all those working towards a free, democratic and non-racial Zimbabwe – by implication an endorsement of the South African liberation movement. Thus, as Nelson Mandela declared in February 1990, 'even during the darkest days' of South Africa's history, NUSAS 'held the flag of liberty high'.

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