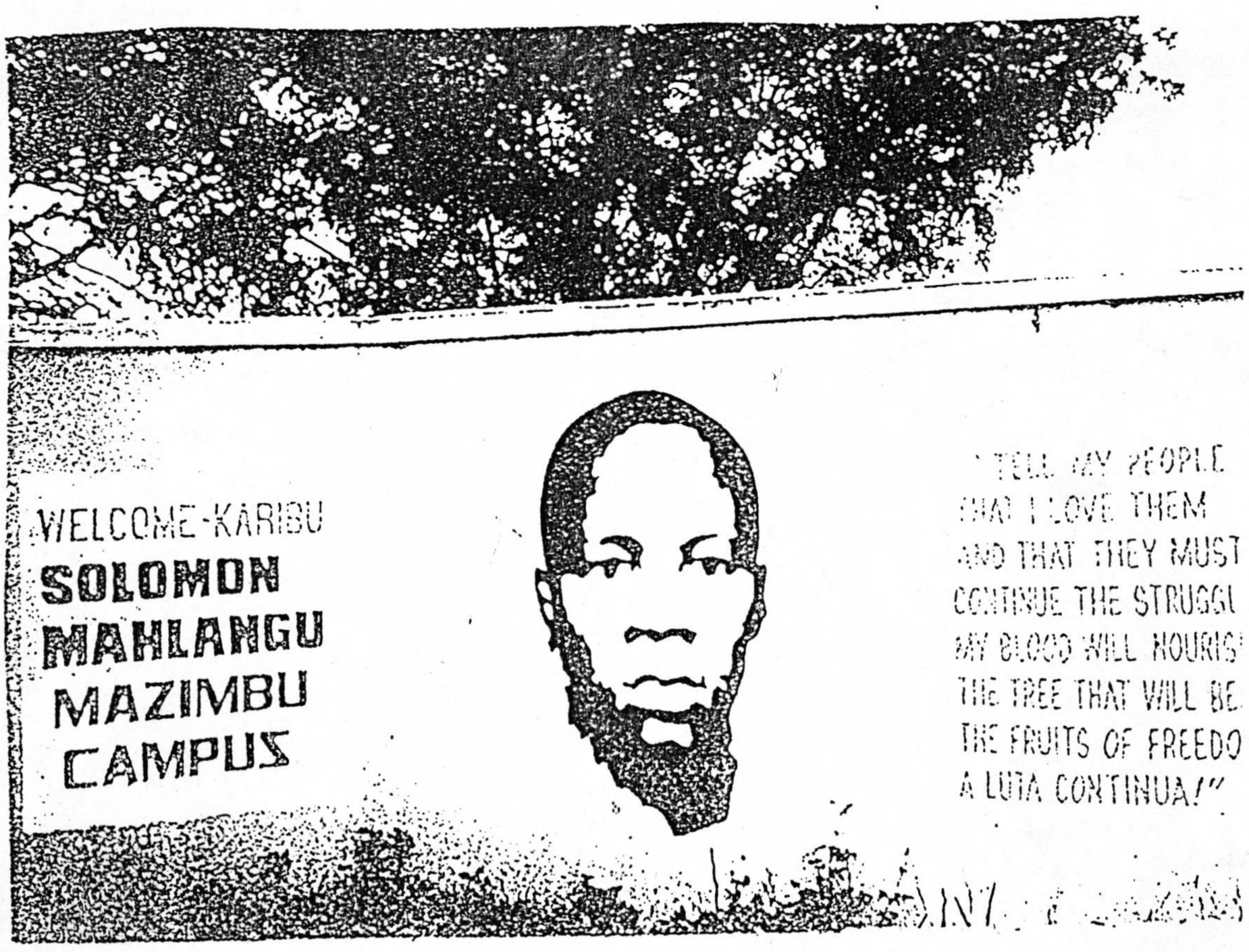
The Students of Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College: 1978-1992



Solomon Mahlangu's picture at the main entrance: in the ANC period, the sign read "Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College"

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that the conclusions herein are my own.

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L. B. Maaba

Summary

Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College was an ANC school in Tanzania which came into existence in 1978. The school was built in response to the Soweto uprising of 1976 and, more broadly, to Bantu Education. SOMAFCO started as a secondary school but it was later realized that there was a need for a children's centre and primary school. The school finally accommodated students from different backgrounds, including those who had run away from the apartheid regime, children of ANC cadres who had left the country before the insurgency of 1976, and children of mixed parentage, for example, South African and Tanzanian or South African and Zambian. SOMAFCO grew into a big complex which included, apart from the divisions mentioned above, a hospital, farm and furniture factory. The thesis describes the life of students at all divisions of SOMAFCO, as well as their political and social activities and their relations with the surrounding Tanzanian society, and analyses the stresses and ambiguities of exile life in what was claimed to be a revolutionary educational institution.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have played an important role in the accomplishment of this thesis.

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I also thank those people who were interviewed during the research. This stretches from those who are within the country to those in Tanzania. But it is unfortunate that some of

the people who left for exile never returned home as they became of blessed memory while in exile. To all of them, especially the students of SOMAFCO I say: you have made history and history has been made through you. We will live to remember you. May your souls rest in peace. Amandla!

Lastly my family. My mom Khabonina has been very supportive and patient as I went from one level of study to another. There have been financial difficulties sometimes but through my mom's assistance I have managed to pull through. To my brothers Lebogang and Sabelo, my sister Jabulile and her two daughters Noxolo and Lind'okuhle and my own daughter Kamogetsoe, I would like to say: I am grateful to all of you.

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Introduction

The Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, SOMAFCO, was the African National Congress' school for exiled youth and for children of exiled activists in Tanzania between the years 1978 and 1992. The school came about as a result of the 16 June 1976 insurgency in Soweto. Though it began as a secondary school, it soon developed to include a children's centre, primary school, farm, furniture factory and hospital.

The presence of the farm, furniture factory and hospital helped the school to be self sufficient. With the help of Tanzanian labour, which amounted to about 80% of what was required, Mazimbu, as the settlement came to be known, existed until its closure in 1992 when the South African part of the Mazimbu population returned to South Africa.

This research explores the lives and activities of SOMAFCO students from nursery school to secondary school level. It deals with educational, social, political and other aspects of the students' lives. Many questions arise from this, including the following. How was SOMAFCO different from Bantu Education schools? What type of punishment was used at school? How did SOMAFCO differ from the schools of other liberation movements like ZAPU and ZANU? Were students politically active? How did they feel about the South African regime? If they were bitter, how did they express their feelings? What did students do during leisure? Were they active in sport? Did cultural activities take place at SOMAFCO? Lastly, when at SOMAFCO, how did students feel about returning to South Africa?

Literature Review

There is little literature on South African exile that is relevant to this thesis. Important is Hilda Bernstein's *Rift: the Exile Experience of South Africans*. She touches on how South Africans who ran away from the regime spent their time in exile. She also describes how some students left South Africa for exile and ultimately arrived at SOMAFCO. This book not only provides readers with exiles' experiences but also covers the activities of students before going into exile.[1]

There is little work directly about SOMAFCO. What exists will be used in this thesis where necessary. These works include an unpublished paper by Petu Serote[2] and an article by Patricia McFadden appearing in *Pedagogy of Domination: Toward a Democratic Education in South Africa* edited by Mokubong Nkomo,[3] as well as a 1997 thesis by R. Govender entitled "The Rhetoric and Reality of Curriculum Development at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College 1978-1984".[4]

There is also a fictional or fictionalized literature on exile which is worth considering for its evocation of the experience of these years, such as that of Mbulelo Mzamane. In one of his short stories, "Faku", the main character and his friends Mashile and Teddy, leave

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[1] H. Bernstein, *The Rift: the Exile Experience of South Africans,* (London, 1994).
[2] P. Serote, " Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College: A Unique South African Experience in Tanzania". Paper delivered at the Southern African Comparative and History Society Conference, Broederstroom, 29-30 October 1992.
[3] P. McFadden, "Youth Transform Education: Observations at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College", in M. Nkomo *Pedagogy of Domination: Toward a Democratic Education in South Africa*, (Trenton, 1990).
[4] R. Govender , " The Rhetoric and Reality of Curriculum Development at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, 1978-1984", MA mini thesis, University of Western Cape, March, 1997.

South Africa illegally for Botswana to seek refuge.[5] The story of the three youths resembles that of many SOMAFCO students and others who began to leave South Africa after the Soweto uprising.

There is a rather small literature on Southern African liberation movements' educational endeavours in exile. Some of the essays in *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* edited by R. N. Nare deal with the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), whose schools were based in Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique during the 1970s. Political education seems to have been dominant in ZAPU and ZANU camps.[6] This begs the question: did political education dominate SOMAFCO's agenda as it appears to have done in ZANU and ZAPU camps?

The work of A. and B. Isaacman, *Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution, 1900-1992*, discusses the efforts by the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo), during its war against the Portuguese, to open schools for students in the freed zones of Mozambique.[7] Like ZAPU and ZANU, Frelimo provided its supporters with formal education so as to prepare them to govern. Did SOMAFCO in Tanzania also serve as a training camp preparing young South Africans to govern in the future South Africa? A journal article has also been written about the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) school formed in Congo in 1984. It would be interesting to look into their

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[5] M. V. Mzamane, *The Children of the Diaspora and Other Stories of Exile*, (Florida, 1996).
[6] P.M. Nare, "Education and War", in N. Bhebe and T. Ranger (eds) *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, vol. 2 (Harare, 1994) pp. 135-136.
[7] A. Isaacman and B. Isaacman, *Mozambique:From Colonialism to Revolution, 1900-1902*, (Denver, 1983) p. 93.

curriculum as well so as to compare it to that of SOMAFCO.[8] The author, however has failed to really examine the curriculum of this school.

Clearly, revolutionary education is a vast subject which goes far beyond Southern Africa. Cuba is one example. In an interview conducted by Frei Betto in *Fidel And Religion* Fidel Castro states that in Cuba university students are sent to various places in the rural areas to assist with manual labour on the farms. According to him, this helps to combine manual labour with intellect.[9] Also, the youth in Tanzania formed part of *ujamaa* villages which were aimed at self sufficiency.[10] Ideas like this spread from the Tanzanian environment and can be found at SOMAFCO. Dr Njobe, a former principal of SOMAFCO, says that SOMAFCO students also performed manual labour. They would, for example, as part of education with production, assist farm workers at SOMAFCO.[11] Through education with production, the ANC sought to produce students different from those with a Bantu Education background.

There is no doubt that SOMAFCO was influenced by socialist ideas as is seen in the two examples mentioned above. But the " dignity of labour", or education with production, has its roots more widely in the mission stations which came into existence in the previous century. Here, the missionaries expected converts to acquire both manual and

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[8] Y. Nordkvelle, "Teachers, culture, and politics: the struggle for a curriculum for the free Namibia. A case-study of the Namibia secondary Technical School" *Journal of Education Policy*, 10, 4 (1995): 361-371.

[9] F. Betto, *Fidel and Religion* (Sydney, 1986) pp. 139-140.

[10] G. Hyden, *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and an Uncaptured Peasantry* (London, 1978) p. 101.

[11] Interview Brown Maaba with Dr Wintshi Njobe, Education Department, Bisho, 26 August, 1996 (Henceforth Interview with Njobe).

mental skills.[12] There were tensions then that were also apparent at SOMAFCO. Some, like the Scottish missionary Robert Laws, in Malawi, writing in 1927, said " [t]o discard or even lessen the literary training would be to block the way for the advancement of native leaders and means the reduction of the natives to a class of helots".[13] Others regarded manual labour as appropriate for Africans and in some sense a noble occupation.

Undertaking research about SOMAFCO without looking at what influenced the students to leave South Africa, would be like trying to separate milk from tea. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the background of Bantu Education in South Africa and how its implementation culminated in the outbreak of the Soweto uprising in 1976. In this regard, work which deals extensively with Bantu Education has to be examined. This includes works like *Year of Fire, Year of Ash, the Soweto Revolt*, by B. Hirson, and P. Kallaway's edited collection *Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans*. There is no doubt that the type of education given to blacks was a well calculated move by the apartheid regime aimed at marginalizing them from political, social, economic and intellectual power and influence. Describing his vision of African education, H. F. Verwoed, the Minister of Native Affairs, stated that:

> Until now he [a black man] has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze. This attitude is not only uneconomic because money is spent for an education which has no specific aim but it is also dishonest to continue it. It is

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[12] See, *inter alia*, A Victor Murray, *The School in the Bush: a Critical Study of the Theory and Practice of Native Education in Africa* (London,1929); K. J. King, *Pan Africanism and Education: a Study of Race Philanthropy and Education in the Southern States of America and East Africa* (Oxford, 1971).
[13] See K.J. McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi*, 1875-1940 (Cambridge, 1977), p. 182.

> abundantly clear that unplanned education creates many problems, disrupting the community life of the Bantu and endangering the community life of the Europeans.[14]

Unfortunately for the apartheid regime, black South African students realized in 1976 that they were not allowed to graze on these green pastures. They took to the streets and ultimately many ended up in exile.

The history of SOMAFCO remains a "virgin land". The bulk of information about SOMAFCO remains unexplored and is in the form of primary sources, lying in the ANC archives at Fort Hare University, as well as in the memories of the many students, teachers, administrators and others who were associated with the school.

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[14] P. Christie and C. Collins " Bantu Education: Apartheid Ideology and Labour Reproduction", in P. Kallaway, (ed.) *Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans*, (London, 1994) p. 173.

Chapter 1

Bantu Education and the Outbreak of the Soweto Revolt

The Eiselen Commission

In 1948, the National Party under D.F. Malan won the whites only general elections in South Africa. This was a turning point in the history of the country as the new government laid emphasis on racially discriminatory laws which would eventually be called apartheid. These laws also applied to education. In order to further its aims in this field, the National Party government appointed a Commission on African Education under the chairmanship of Dr W. M Eiselen. The Eiselen Commission, as it came to be known, was to recommend the type of education suitable for blacks as a separate race.

The Eiselen Commission recommended that black education should be centralized, suggesting that it should come under the authority of the central government so that the National Party should have control and implement the ideas of Bantu Education, and that African community involvement in education through parents committees should be instituted. The establishment of parents' committees should not be seen as a way of listening to the black population, but rather as a way of further dividing and ruling it as will be seen later. The Commission further recommended that funds should be "effectively" used in education,[1] and that the most appropriate environment for black education was the "reserves" or homelands.[2]

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[1] D. M. Wilson, *Against the Odds: The Struggle of the Cape African Night schools 1945-1967* (Cape Town, 1991) pp. 41-42.

[2] T. Lodge, "The Parents' School Boycott: Eastern Cape and the East Rand Townships", in P. Kallaway, (ed), *Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans,* (London, 1981) p. 268.

School syllabi were to be controlled by the central government so as to produce skills appropriate to a subordinate role in the economy. At the end of Standard 2, a beginning was to be made with the teaching of at least one official language on a purely utilitarian basis, that is, as a medium of oral expression to be used in contacts with the European sector of the population. Manipulative skills would be developed and where possible an interest in the soil and the observation of natural phenomena stimulated.[3]

It can be seen that the aim of this education was to limit the chances of employment for black people. They were to be subjected to an education which would cut them off from the resources of a language like English, and they also had to "develop an interest in the soil" so as to work for white farmers or remain trapped in the cycle of migrant labour and impoverished homeland agriculture.

The Commission also recommended the employment of underqualified female teachers at primary level. This would reduce strikes by teachers as female teachers, vulnerable for many reasons, can be easily exploited and were less likely to strike. This caused the standard of education to deteriorate as most teachers had not reached standard ten. Elementary education was thus affected and the child could not be expected to do well at secondary school if he or she could not receive good basic education. At secondary level the number of teachers who had university degrees dropped in comparison with the pre-1953 period. White teachers were also to be phased out not only in black primary schools but also in secondary schools.[4]

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[3] K. Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge: Black Education 1940-1990*, (Cape Town, 1992), p. 34.
[4] Christie and Collins, " Bantu Education", p. 176.

The ultimate result was that students tended to leave school before completion. The state also planned to reduce its spending through, amongst other methods, shorter daily sessions.[5] This not only gave the African child less learning time but also frustrated parents who had to go to work and at the same time think about their children who only attended half days at school. Children who were without grandparents or somebody to look after them would soon be on the streets of the townships roaming around, with no guarantee for their safety.

The Eiselen Commission also recommended that the employment of teachers, the content of the syllabus, the admission of pupils and all other matters in which schools themselves had a degree of autonomy were to be under the control of the central administration.[6] Religious education was to be stressed as well as knowledge of hygiene.[7] The type of religious education implemented encouraged its recipients to accept their situation and regard whatever happened to them as God's will.

After the Eiselen Commission had submitted its report to the government in 1953, the Bantu Education Act was enacted. H.F. Verwoerd became the Minister of Native Affairs and the control of African education was assigned to his department. The drafting of regulations governing the content of African education was left to him. All African schools came under his control and no African educational institution could be established or operated without his permission.[8] Those schools run by the missionaries were offered the option of either

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[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Christie and Collins, " Bantu Education", pp. 160-161.
[7] Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, p. 26, Christie and Collins, "Bantu Education", pp. 160-161.
[8] Christie and Collins, "Bantu Education" p. 161.

renting or selling their schools to the government or continuing without aid from the state. Those that chose to continue as independent institutions found it difficult to operate because the government was not prepared to aid them.[9]

There is no doubt that Bantu Education aimed at training black people to occupy inferior positions within South African society. In 1954, Verwoerd stated that "it [the Department of Native Affairs] will know for what class of higher education a Native is fitted and whether he will have a chance in life to use his knowledge, ... what is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice".[10] This statement suggests that it was made very difficult for black students to take science subjects or mathematics at school so as to push them into certain fields which had not been reserved for whites. One way of achieving this objective was by having a few poorly trained teachers to teach science subjects so as to allow the situation to further deteriorate. Bantu Education was intended to make it difficult for blacks to progress beyond a few specific professions, such as teaching and nursing. In theory, they were to be trained to serve their own community though in fact their role was to serve the white community.[11] As Verwoerd put it: "There is no place for him [the black man] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his community however, all doors are open. For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European Community, where he cannot be absorbed."[12]

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[9] B. Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash: the Soweto Revolt, Roots of a Revolution*? (London, 1979) pp. 44-46.
[10] *Ibid* .,p.46.
[11] *Ibid*, p. 46.
[12] Christie and Collins,:"Bantu Education", p.173.

In 1955, the state also took control of night schools in black areas. In the years that followed, these were closed. As enrolment in night schools was approximately 120 000 in 1953-1954, the closure of these schools meant a significant drop in the number of blacks obtaining schooling. At tertiary level, the authorities enacted the 1959 Universities Extension Act, which closed white universities to black students. This was the beginning of the establishment of separate tertiary institutions for blacks. In that way, the state could control both administrative structures and the curriculum in black universities.

Technical colleges were not omitted. Blacks had to leave white training colleges, which left black people on the streets as there were no technical colleges and vocational training centres for them in the 1950s. It was only in the period of economic growth in the 1960's that this sector of education was expanded as the country needed more black labour to exploit.[13] The M.L. Sultan Technical College in Durban, established mainly for Indians, was debarred from accepting African students.

The government also made it clear that schools offering vocational education or training for a trade had to be registered with the Department of Bantu Education. Unregistered schools would not to be subsidized. In this way, the government sought to eliminate schools it considered undesirable.[14]

The establishment of homelands or bantustans was another product of the regime's apartheid ideology. The 1959 Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act provided for the establishment of separate black governments in the geographically fragmented homelands under the influence of the regime in Pretoria. In these homelands, in fact a new version of the "native reserves", education of

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[13] *Ibid,* pp .172-180.
[14] M. Horrel, *Bantu Education to 1968*, (Cape Town, 1968) ,p. 30.

an allegedly authentically African nature would take place.[15] Not only would Africans receive an education "suitable" for them, but they would also be separated from other ethnic groups. This in turn promoted tribalism.

Another point of importance about Bantu Education was funding. Before the National Party took control, black education was state-funded. The introduction of Bantu Education changed this. Blacks had to contribute to the financing of their own schooling. Initially, four fifths of the direct taxes paid by Africans were channeled into Bantu Education. This was increased but was still not enough, and resulted in black parents having to make a compulsory contribution to their schools as well as to pay for their own textbooks and stationery. This was not required of white children.[16] The government ignored the fact that most black parents were at the bottom of the scale with regard to wages. This was one of the factors which contributed to lower enrolment in schools.[17]

The question now arises of popular reaction to Bantu Education.

The Response to Bantu Education

There is a long history of concern by black parents about their children's education. For example in 1944, the Amalgamated Mission School in Brakpan was boycotted by the parents of some of its 900 African pupils. Mothers picketed the school's entrance and persuaded children to return home in protest against the dismissal of a politically active teacher by the education authorities. Again,

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[15] *Crisis and Challenge*, pp, 125-126.
[16] *Ibid*, p.180.
[17] E. Unterhalter," Changing aspects of reformism in bantu education 1953-89" in E. Unterhalter *et al* (eds) *Apartheid Education and Popular Struggles*, (Johannesburg, 1991) pp. 49-50.

in 1952, a parents' protest committee organized a boycott of Orlando High School after three teachers were dismissed for criticizing the Eiselen recommendations in public. This protest was led by the chairman of the ANC branch, I. M. Maseko. Less than a third of the pupils attended school during the boycott which lasted for two months.[18] This action can be seen as a direct precursor to the wider protests against Bantu Education.

According to Lodge, the earliest opposition to Bantu Education came from teachers. They had to work a double session day with larger classes. Employment qualifications were low and teachers came under the direct authority of the government as had been proposed by the Eiselen report. They were sometimes also directly controlled by the generally uneducated members of school boards which had the power to recommend their dismissal.[19]

Teachers' opposition to Bantu Education came mainly from two teachers organizations, the Cape African Teachers' Association and the Transvaal African Teachers' Associations (CATA and TATA). The annual conference of CATA in 1952 condemned the Eiselen regulations. In 1953, in defiance of warnings from the authorities, 200 teachers met at Queenstown to discuss ways of resisting Bantu Education. This had been preceded by a well attended public meeting in Langa, Cape Town, to protest against the proposed legislation. The state realized the dangers posed by CATA and withdrew its recognition of the organization. The government also ensured through the rural school boards that CATA members were dismissed.

TATA, in contrast to CATA, was an urban organization on the Witwatersrand. Its members

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[18] Lodge, " The Parents' School Boycott", p. 269.
[19] *Ibid*, p. 270.

demonstrated militantly on the streets of Johannesburg for higher salaries, and from 1952, began to organize anti-Bantu Education teachers' conferences in Johannesburg and the East Rand. It also attempted to set up Parent-Teacher Associations to lend some popular weight to resistance to Bantu Education. However, TATA's opposition to Bantu Education was less widespread than CATA's. This was because Transvaal teachers were subjected from 1950 to a strict provincial prohibition on political activity. But despite that, there were incidents which showed that although teachers were under pressure in the Transvaal, their concern about the future of their children was unquestionable. For example, in February 1954, one of the Parent-Teacher Associations met in Soweto. This meeting, which was attended by 500 people, raised the idea that a boycott of schools should be used as a strategy against Bantu Education.[20]

The ANC also responded to Bantu Education. The decision by the ANC to oppose the policy was taken shortly after the passage of the act in 1953 when the ANC announced the launching of a "Resist Apartheid Campaign" in May 1954. It included Bantu Education amongst the issues. At an ANC conference in Durban, in December 1954, the organization recommended the withdrawal of children from schools for a week. The conference also decided that the boycott would begin on 1 April 1955, which was the date of the administrative transfer of the schools to the central government. It was decided that the boycott should be in the hands of the ANC Women's and Youth Leagues. However, the boycott was postponed as the ANC stated it was not completely ready for action in April. It was eventually replaced by a boycott of school boards and committee elections.

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[20] Ibid, pp. 271-274.

It was not until the 12th of April that the townships in the East Rand embarked on class boycotts, with Soweto and Sophiatown joining in the days to follow. Marches also formed part of the protest and these were usually broken up by the police. This was subsequently followed by the expulsion of students from schools as Verwoerd made a call on students to return to class by the 25th of April. Many, however, did not start so soon.[21] The boycott also spread to other areas like the Eastern Cape. The ANC formed its own schools, often called cultural clubs. But these were not successful as they were not well organized.[22]

The struggle against Bantu Education should not be seen as separate from the struggle against apartheid in general. In the 1950's, not only was the ANC's focus on issues pertaining to Bantu Education but on whole range of laws which aimed at segregation. These included the Group Areas Act and the regulations obliging Africans to carry passes. Protests against all these were organized by the ANC. The defiance campaign of 1952, for example, aimed at opposing the laws which discriminated against blacks.[23]

Not only did racial segregation lead to protests by the ANC but to closer co-operation with other organizations which fought against apartheid. With the ANC, the congress group included the South African Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress and the Congress of Democrats.[24] This close co-operation between different racial groups led Professor Z.K. Mathews, the Cape President of the ANC, to say that " I wonder whether time has not come for the African National Congress to consider the question of convening a National Convention, a Congress of the People,

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[21] *Ibid, pp. 274-276.*
[22] P. Christie, *The Right to Learn: The Struggle for Education in South Africa.* (B raamfontein, 1990) p. 231.
[23] J. Pampallis, *Foundations of the new South Africa,* (London, 1991) p. 196.
[24] *Ibid,* p. 10.

representing the people of this country irrespective of race or colour to draw up a Freedom Charter for the democratic South Africa of the Future".[25] Professor Mathews' words were soon put into action.

On the 25 and 26 June 1955, the Congress of the People took place at Kliptown, Johannesburg. About three thousand delegates from all over South Africa attended.[26] The Freedom Charter, as it came to be known, was adopted as a guiding document towards a free liberated South Africa. Human rights were endorsed in the document and this included free, compulsory and equal education for all.[27]

Black Students and the Struggle in the 1960's

The early sixties saw a change of strategy by the ANC and the newly formed Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) which, led by Mangaliso Sobukwe, had broken away from the ANC in 1959. Over the years, the struggle became increasingly radical, and indeed the sixties saw the advent of the armed struggle.

Both the ANC and the PAC were banned in April 1960, following the massacre of 69 unarmed people by the police in Sharpville. Both *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (The Spear of the Nation), the ANC military wing, and *Poqo,* a military organisation aligned to the PAC, had to operate underground. Between 1962 and 1963, acts of sabotage by these two military wings were reported in the South

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[25] T. Karis and M.Gerhart,(eds) *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964*, vol 3, (Stanford, 1987) p. 105.
[26] H. Holland, *The Struggle: History of the African National Congress*, (London, 1989) p.97.
[27] *Sechaba, The Official Organ of the African National Congress*, vol 3, 4, 1969.

African newspapers.[28] The PAC's planned attack on whites and policemen in 1963 was crushed. Many PAC supporters were arrested and some sentenced to death for taking part in military activities.[29]

The ANC suffered the same fate. The armed struggle by the ANC was crushed when prominent members of the organisation were arrested. These included Nelson Mandela and seven others. All were found guilty of high treason and were sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island in 1964.[30] The National Party thought it had finally destroyed the liberation movement by silencing its leadership. This was not the case, as the struggle for freedom took another direction in the years that followed.

One of the important things about *Poqo* and *Umkhonto we Sizwe* actions and the arrest of the leaders of both the PAC and the ANC is that all these events were known to black university students. Most of the students maintained allegiance to these liberation movements even though there was no freedom of speech on campuses. But privately, students participated in political debate.[31]

Black students were also affected by other forms of conflict and manipulation. For example, they were subjected to a tight disciplinary code and isolated on campuses that had been deliberately built in rural areas far from the mainstream of political activity. The students were furthermore separated on tribal grounds, Fort Hare for Xhosa, Ngoye for Zulus and Turfloop for Tswana,

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[28] Hirson, *Year of Fire*, p. 64.
[29] R. Davies, *et al.*, *The Struggle for South Africa*, vol. 2, (London, 1988) p. 300.
[30] J. Frederikse, *The Unbreakable Thread; Non Racialism in South Africa*, (Harare, 1990) p. 91.
[31] Hirson, *Year of Fire*, p. 64.

Sotho and Venda. They also disliked the idea that their universities and especially their senates and councils were dominated and controlled by white professors and lecturers. Furthermore, as stated before, black students were barred from studying in white universities, though this did not apply to the University of South Africa (UNISA) nor to the Natal University Medical School.[32] Moreover, in the 1960's, only Fort Hare students were involved actively in demonstrations. Only in 1967 when many students joined the University Christian Movement (UCM) and two years later when the South African Students Organization (SASO) was formed did black students begin to mobilize on a large scale.[33]

Prior to SASO and UCM, black university students were part of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). Even though black students were part of NUSAS, they felt that their white counterparts had rights which they did not have as blacks. Black students tended to feel that white students were amongst the privileged in South Africa no matter how critical they were of apartheid. What made matters worse was that white students did not feel the need to take their political demands outside the campus. On the other hand, black students felt that the struggle for freedom had to be taken to the streets as every black person was affected by apartheid. Some of the black students felt that white students wanted to act as masterminds behind the black person's liberation and that they dominated the discussions so that blacks felt like bystanders. Steve Biko, one of the black students studying medicine in Natal, is quoted as saying that " It does not help us to see several black faces in a multi-racial gathering which ultimately concentrates on what the

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[32] Horrel, *Bantu Education to 1968*, pp. 34-36.
[33] Hirson, *Year of Fire*, p. 64.

white students believe are the needs of black students".[34] In such a situation, the split between white and black students was imminent as blacks felt that their role in NUSAS was undermined.

The NUSAS Congress of 1967 at Rhodes University in Grahamstown was a turning point in the history of black university students. During this conference, black students had to sleep in a church as a result of racial segregation. Earlier, black students had been promised by their white counterparts that residences would be completely integrated for the first time at a NUSAS conference.[35] After having assessed and analyzed the situation, the black students took a decision:

> Whereas we the black students of South Africa having examined and assessed the role of Black students in the struggle for the emancipation of the black people in South Africa and the betterment of their social, political and economic lot, and having unconditionally declared our own lack of faith in the genuineness and capability of multi-racial organisations and individual whites in the country to effect rapid social changes .... do commit ourselves into the realisation of the worth of the Black Man, the assertion of his human dignity and to promoting consciousness and self-reliance of the black community.[36]

This new philosophy by black university students in which black people asserted their pride in the community was referred to as Black Consciousness. This philosophy was expressed through SASO and the Black People's Convention which was formed in 1972. Steve Biko, the first President of SASO, was regarded as the main thinker behind Black Consciousness.[37]

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[34] *Ibid*, p. 69.
[35] D. Woods, *Cry Freedom: Biko* (New York, 1979) p. 27.
[36] Hirson, *Year of Fire*, p.76.
[37] Woods, *Cry Freedom*, p. 73.

As it was the aim of SASO to take the struggle to the people, it began to search for elements with which it could align itself. In its search, SASO looked for bodies which had a national outlook in an effort to form a national political structure, and found this through sports federations and religious bodies. After various conferences, the Black People's Convention was formed. SASO had finally infiltrated the black community.[38]

It is important to try and analyze the reasons why students like Biko felt the need to divorce themselves from white society. These young people lived in a turbulent era in the history of South Africa. They witnessed the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960, and saw their leaders imprisoned at Robben Island. They had vividly experienced apartheid, for example sleeping in churches during conferences while their white counterparts slept in dormitories, with little or no action being taken to remedy such situations. At the universities, they were facing white authorities who would not tolerate any form of defiance. All this shaped the thinking of men like Biko who felt ostracized from the white community and resorted to Black Consciousness as the way forward. They felt that white society had let them down in many ways and that black people had to rediscover themselves and once more walk tall in South African society. This is the background to black South African student politics at tertiary level. At secondary school level, there were parallel developments.

Towards the Revolution

Bantu Education made sure that life would be miserable for a black student. By 1969, black schools were poorly equipped, bleak, dilapidated and overcrowded. There were few books in the schools. Textbooks had to be bought by parents, and school libraries were run down if they

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[38] Hirson, *Year of Fire*, p. 76.

existed at all. In 1969 only 4.33% of African pupils were in secondary schools and very few completed standard ten. In 1969, only 869 obtained a pass mark which would give them an opportunity to proceed to a degree course at a university. Of these, not all could proceed to universities because of financial problems, and, as Hirson states, "even if they did, 869 would represent only a tiny fraction of the total South African university enrolment of 83000 in 1970".[39]

By 1971, a few changes came when Bantu Education officials permitted private donations to black schools. Companies like Anglo-American offered grants amounting to R 85 000 in total, and TEACH [Teach Every African Child] was formed by the Star newspaper in October 1970 to provide funds for classrooms in Soweto. Between 1973 and 1974, TEACH collected half a million rand and provided accommodation for a further 15 000 pupils in Soweto.[40] Although funds were made available by these non-governmental structures to assist blacks in their education, overcrowding in schools continued. The Bantu Education Account which was established in 1955 as the only source of funding for black education was abolished in 1972 and all its assets, debts and responsibilities transferred to the Consolidated Revenue Fund.[41]

In 1970, senior students from the secondary schools in Soweto formed the African Students Movement. After establishing contact with schools in the Eastern Cape and the Eastern Transvaal, a conference was held in March 1972 and a new body called the South African Students' Movement (SASM) was formed. It was this body which called the crucial demonstrations for 16 June 1976 and provided the students with leadership for what became the uprising. One of the major

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[39] *Ibid..*, pp. 94-95.
[40] *Ibid..*, p. 97.
[41] Unterhalter, " Changing aspects of reformism in Bantu Education, 1953-89", p.50.

obstacles that SASM had to fight was Bantu Education itself. Tebello Motapanyane, one of the SASM leaders, asserts that the school students were very much aware that Bantu Education was designed to domesticate and not to educate. This led them conclude that the education they received was inferior.[42]

In the early 1970s black students who had formed their own organizations like SASO and SASM were beginning to show their anger and frustration. At the beginning of 1972, a SASO leader, O. R. Tiro was expelled from Turfloop University for criticizing black universities for their racism. His expulsion sparked a national outcry from other black universities which was followed by class boycotts. This incident was followed by further student unrest at the universities of Fort Hare and Western Cape in 1973. This unrest was followed by the expulsion of SASO office bearers from the universities.[43] At the same time school students in rural and urban areas were striking and demonstrating. Some schools were burned down and some had to close as a result of demonstrations.[44]

The frustration faced by both university and school students led to a search for closer cooperation between them. In June 1973, the Provincial Youth Organisations were invited by the Black Community Programmes and SASO jointly to a seminar, and a National Youth Organisation was formed. The aims of the new organization did not differ from those already outlined for BPC and included literacy campaigns, a home education scheme, a bursary fund, the establishment of creches, the promotion of black theology and the organization of theatre, drama and art workshops.

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[42] Hirson, *Year of Fire*, p. 103.
[43] *Ibid*, pp. 86-87.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

University and school students also formed local student associations whose aim was to promote solidarity as well as to secure co-operation between students and parents.

There is no doubt that SASO had infiltrated school students through these programmes. Its activities in the townships are described by Mosima Sexwale, a former student of Orlando West High School. He is reported as having said, "[t]hroughout the universities and high schools of South Africa, the South African Students' Organization and its high school equivalent, the South African Students' Movement were active, in conducting meetings to preach the philosophy of black consciousness".[45]

Although SASM shared SASO-BCP ideas, it seemed to be connected to the ANC which was said to be working underground. Ever since its inception, SASM members were harassed by the security police. This resulted in some of its members going underground and others going into exile. Hirson maintains that those who went underground were in contact with clandestine ANC groups and that this resulted in the formation of underground cells.[46] As Sexwale said, indicating the influence of ANC members upon SASM, "[t]here were former members living in the townships and the ANC was a common topic of discussion".[47]

The underground activities of the PAC and the ANC in the early 1970s also politicized the youth. With its newsletter *Amandla-Matla*, the ANC urged campaigns against the bantustans and support for the liberation of Angola and Mozambique. It also urged the youth and students to campaign against Bantu Education. The PAC was less active. Although it was said to be operating in

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[45] J. Kane-Bernam, *Soweto: Black Revolt White Reaction*, (Johannesburg, 1978) p.223.
[46] Hirson, *Year of fire*, p. 104.
[47] Kane-Bernam, *Soweto*, p. 224.

Kagiso, the township outside Krugersdorp, Hirson says there are no known examples of it distributing its literature in the townships.[48]

Other people who played an important role in spreading the ANC gospel in the early '70s were former Robben Island inmates. Joe Gqabi for example, an early *Umkhonto we Sizwe* volunteer was released from prison in 1975 after serving twelve years. He is said to have helped to develop SASM.[49] Harry Gwala, also a veteran of the ANC, was influential in his Natal base during a short period out of prison between 1972 and 1975. In 1975 he was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment for membership of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*.[50] Also in 1975 members of the PAC operating underground were arrested and convicted for preparing acts of sabotage.[51]

During the 1970s, the ANC also recruited youth for *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. These recruits were sent to Egypt and the Soviet Union for military training. They were sent back to South Africa and played an important role in setting up underground structures inside the country before the Soweto uprising.[52] Some of the people who joined the ANC in exile were SASM members.[53] Having been politicized through black consciousness and the ANC and PAC, there is no doubt that many amongst the youth were ready for any type of action against the regime. The dilapidated schools in the townships fuelled their anger. According to Motapanyane "we were of course very alive to the fact that we as black people were being oppressed. The students especially were quite sensitive to this and we were all trying to find a way of doing something about it. It was just unfortunate that

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[48] Hirson, *Year of Fire*, pp. 198-202.
[49] Kane-Bernam, *Soweto*, p. 225.
[50] S. Ellis and T Sechaba, *Comrades against Apartheid: The ANC and the South African Communist Party in exile*, (London, 1992) p. 73.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[53] Hirson, *Year of Fire*, p. 104.

we were not so clear about how to show our anger and resentment in a clear political way."[54] Suddenly, the Minister of Bantu Education, M.C. Botha, proposed an action which mobilized the forces of opposition.

Early in 1976 the Minister of Bantu Education proposed that one half of all the subjects in black schools were to be taught in Afrikaans, amongst them mathematics (the subject with the highest failure rate) and social studies (history and geography). This met with opposition from parents, teachers and pupils. There were demonstrations in some schools against the introduction of lessons in Afrikaans, and as the protests increased in the Soweto area, students joined forces and eventually marched together on the 16th of June 1976. What started as a peaceful protest against Afrikaans turned into a massacre as police used live ammunition against the students. The protest spread throughout South Africa including universities. This was a turning point in the history of the country.[55]

As a result of the June 16th events, many young people were arrested and tortured by the security police for participating in the protest. Because of fear of harassment by police throughout the country, many young people left South Africa.[56] Many joined the banned political organisations which were already in exile and especially the ANC and the PAC.

After the 1976 uprising, the major problem of the exiled ANC was what to do with the influx of young people swelling their camps. Some of them were as young as thirteen and still too young to

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[54] *Ibid*, p.278.
[55] *Ibid*, p. 175.
[56] *Ibid*, p. 278.

be soldiers. They needed parental care and the idea of leaving home unprepared to go into the unknown world must have been traumatic. They needed guidance and people to look after them as surrogate parents. The idea of a school arose for these young people, but where?

Mazimbu Settlement

The Tanzanian government, which had welcomed ANC refugees as early as the '60s, decided to allocate land to the ANC for the building of a school at Mazimbu in Tanzania. The land initially belonged to a Greek farmer, Anatago.. The Greeks left the plantations after the land was nationalized by the 1967 Arusha Declaration. Some of the workers requested the government to be allowed to continue staying on the land so as to make use of it for farming, and a man by the name of Mnemba became the manager of the "sisal estate committee".[57] According to Mohamed Jambwali, the "Sisal Estate Union" or committee came under the government.[58] Mr Sadiki says that people were not happy about the decision to grant the visitors what they considered to be their land. A representative of the sisal estate residence was sent to parliament at Dodoma to deliver their grievances. This bore no fruit and the locals were forced to leave the camp with no alternative land or accommodation. Some local people refused to leave their homes, and to bring pressure on them the ANC refused to offer them jobs.[59]

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[57] Interview L. Pulumani with W. Mgina, Mazimbu, Tanzania, 13 May 1997 (Henceforth Interview with Mgina); Interview L. Pulumani with O. Sadiki, Mazimbu, Tanzania, 13 May 1997 (Henceforth Interview with Sadiki). Interviews conducted in kiSwahilli, with assistance of interpreters Grace and Yustina.
[58] Interview L. Pulumani with M. Jambwali, Mazimbu, Tanzania, 13 May 1997. Interview conducted in kiSwahili, with assistance of interpreters Grace and Yustina (Henceforth Interview with Jambwali).
[59] Interview with Sadiki.

Although the first brick of the school was laid in January 1979, teaching had already begun in 1978 and this took place in old sisal estate houses which were found at Mazimbu.[60] The school, which began to operate with secondary students only, was named Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College. Solomon Kalushu Mahlangu was born and raised in Pretoria, and participated in the June 1976 uprising. H. Makgothi, the ANC's Secretary for Education from 1983 to 1988, states that Mahlangu left the country because he was wanted by the police. In exile, he joined the ANC military wing *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, and then returned to South Africa to fight the regime but was arrested and sentenced to death on the sixth of April 1979. Before going to the gallows, Mahlangu is said to have spoken these last words to his mother: " [m]y blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom. Please tell my people that I love them."[61] With the birth of SOMAFCO, a new ANC school was operating freely in exile without the interference of the South African regime.

Conclusion

The National Party succeeded in forcing Bantu Education on black people. Although the ANC, teachers, and parents tried to fight against this in the 1950s, the regime was strong enough to maintain its educational policy. With the incarceration of ANC and PAC leaders at Robben Island, the National Party thought they had finally destroyed opposition against apartheid. They were however mistaken. Through the philosophy of Black Consciousness, once more black people mobilized against apartheid in the late '60s and early '70s. The resurrection of the PAC and ANC in

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[60] Interview B. Maaba with Snukkie Zikalala, South African Broadcasting Corporation, Johannesburg, 18 September, 1996 (Henceforth Interview with Snukkie Zikalala).
[61] UFH SOMAFCO, Uncatalogued Document, Education for Liberation: The Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, ANC Publication, 1989.

the early '70s also enhanced the struggle as the youth came to be influenced by these organizations. This politicization of youth, combined with the frustration they faced through Bantu Education, and the introduction of Afrikaans in schools, led them to revolt against the regime in 1976. The apparent result of the 1976 uprising was repression, detention and exile. But for those who left the country, a new chapter opened in their political lives.

Chapter 2

The Charlotte Maxeke Children's Centre

The Origin of the Children's Centre

SOMAFCO was initially meant to be a secondary school catering for students who had not finished their secondary education in South Africa. Although, later, SOMAFCO accommodated ANC children born in exile, the first students were those who had fled from South Africa after the Soweto revolt. But the need to have both a primary school and a children 's centre at SOMAFCO arose as events unfolded in exile.

One of the problems facing the ANC in exile was pregnancy amongst its female cadres. Sometimes this interfered with their duties within the movement. Another issue that bothered the ANC was that many of the mothers who had children in exile were young and had not even developed their own identities, and having a child could add yet more to the young parent's problems. This was likely to be intensified as the young women had left their parents in South Africa, and the normal supports for a young mother in the upbringing of a child were lacking. Moreover some women were not studying but were members of *Umkhonto We Sizwe*.[1]

Bessie Netsianda was a young woman when she left South Africa around August 1981. She went on to complete her O-level examinations in SOMAFCO. She states that the problem with many young women was that they fell pregnant during the course of their studies and means had to be found to look after their children while they pursued their careers.[2]

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[1] UFH SOMAFCO, Day Care Centre Division, Box 1, Residential Children's Centre.

[2] Interview B. Maaba with B. Netsianda, Khotso House, Johannesburg, 24 June, 1997 (Henceforth Interview with Netsianda)

According to an undated ANC document, it became vital to establish a centre "where all our children born to the ANC cadres could be brought up within a collective while their parents pursued their revolutionary tasks."[3] The ANC's Women's Section took it upon itself to raise funds in order to build a creche and a nursery school so that ANC children could receive sound education from the very earliest level. The aims of this proposed children's centre were to provide facilities and an educational programme for their children and thus free mothers to pursue other activities for the movement. Also, the children's centre was aimed at teaching "the children born in exile about the South Africa they had to know".[4]

The creche and nursery school plan was put into effect. In June 1979, a temporary creche was established in Morogoro at the Charlotte Maxeke Mother and Child Centre, which was already established, and which catered for young mothers and their babies. This was opened to gain experience and correct mistakes in advance of planning, building and running the permanent creche.[5] The members of the Women's Section like Ma Mercy and Mable (*sic*) Choabi were asked to come to East Africa to help the young mothers with infants. Infants who were separated from mothers who were working for the ANC in various parts of the world, were also to be catered for. Meanwhile, the Women's Section liaised with Spencer Hodgson and Oswald Dennis (who did architectural work on the project) to facilitate the building of the maternity home and the children's centre in Mazimbu.

While plans were under way for the establishment of the children's centre in Mazimbu, Oswald Dennis found a garage in Morogoro for the nursery school children. Although this

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[3] UFH SOMAFCO, Day Care Centre Division, Box 1, Why an ANC creche.

[4] UFH SOMAFCO, Day Care Centre Division, Box 1, Document on residential children's centre, July, 1979.

[5] *Ibid.*

was a temporary arrangement, the garage was renovated to create an adequate environment for the children. The nursery school was headed by Jane Dumasi and catered for children aged three to six. Amongst the people who assisted Jane Dumasi were two volunteer teachers from Sweden and Denmark who played an important role in the development and training of the children.[6]

The pre-primary school in Morogoro had its shortcomings. Children had to be transported daily to the garage from all the ANC residences in town and from Mazimbu. On rainy days, the children from Mazimbu could not be transported to Morogoro because the river Ngerengere, separating SOMAFCO from the nearest village called "Dark City", would overflow and the bridge would become impassible. It thus became important for the builders in SOMAFCO to quicken their work so that the Morogoro inhabitants could move to Mazimbu. It should be borne in mind that the first bridge that connected SOMAFCO to the outside world was a wooden bridge and that it caused a lot of transport problems. Lives were even lost as a result of the overflowing river during heavy rains. Ultimately, the wooden bridge was swept away by one of the greatest floods ever seen in Tanzania and was replaced by a modern one in 1981.[7]

The nursery school in town faced space restrictions. This was a problem for the children as they needed enough space for play. Jane Dumasi also emphasizes the danger of accidents in such an environment considering that children had to be transported to and from the temporary creche.[8] In 1981, the pre-school was moved to Mazimbu. There, an old sisal

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[6] Interview B. Maaba with J. Dumasi, ANC Headquarters, Johannesburg, 19 June, 1997 (Henceforth Interview with Dumasi).

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *Ibid.*

estate house was renovated and occupied and this served as a nursery until the children's centre, which was still being built, was completed in 1984.[9]

The Charlotte Maxeke Mother and Child Centre, or the Charlottes as the place was called, played an important role in helping young mothers to overcome the difficulties of having children in exile. The older women at the Charlottes helped the young mothers in the upbringing of their children, showing them how to nurse an infant. The young mothers stayed at the Charlottes until they gave birth to their children, and continued there until the child was two years old.[10]

Before being moved to Mazimbu the Charlottes in town were divided into three sections, Charlottes 1, 2, and 3. Each had to organize a day care centre for itself as children needed somewhere to play. Some of the mothers had more than one child and thus it was deemed important to organize the Charlottes in a "creche like system". These were in different areas in town and most of the young women residing there were exiles from countries like Angola and Zambia. They had come to Tanzania to be taught and then discovered they were expecting babies. Most of the women who came from Tanzania itself were SOMAFCO students. In 1982, the Charlottes were moved to SOMAFCO in the part of the Mazimbu campus known as Tabora.[11]

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[9] Interview B. Maaba with D. Makhoba, ANC Headquarters, Johannesburg, 20 June, 1997 (Henceforth Interview with Makhoba).

[10] Interview with Dumase.

[11] Interview B. Maaba with F. Mussagy, ANC Headquarters, Johannesburg, 29 June, 1997 (Henceforth Interview with Mussagy).