YOUTH IN URBAN AFRICAN TOWNSHIPS, 1945 - 1992

A Case Study of the East London Townships.

by

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ABSTRACT

In this study an attempt is made to trace and analyse the changing nature of African youth in urban areas, with particular reference to the East London locations. The period covered is the period from the 1940s to the end of 1992. In common wisdom, an impression is often created that African youth is a homogeneous grouping. This has been particularly the case in the 1980s, when the youth of this country took to the streets and challenged the status quo in a manner unknown in South Africa's recorded history. However, the main conclusion of this study is that the African youth is not homogeneous, and has never been during the period under review. It is argued in the study that the youth divides into various categories which at times interact with one another, but are at times antagonistic to each other.

It has been stressed though, that the various categories have not remained the same. Almost all underwent various changes and transformations. Some of the changes and transformations were radical, leading to the disappearance of some categories, for example, the old distinction of 'school' and 'red' youth. Where such took place, new categories have emerged, even in instances where the intentions were to bring the various categories under the roof of a single category, for example, bringing various categories under the wing of the political youth, or **comrade (qabane)**, as was the case in the 1980s. In tracing the changing nature of African youth in urban areas, the underlying argument has been that there is no evidence of a single youth culture ever prevailing for long. This study attempts to explain why such a culture was not possible. Only a grasp of historical process will, moreover, help to explain the changing youth scene.

DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this study is the result of my own investigation and that it is not being submitted concurrently in candidature for any other degree.

Signed: _____

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Having completed this study, and conscious of the numerous intellectual, material and intellectual debts incurred in the process, I am now faced with the problem of deciding where to start in acknowledging these.

As regards intellectual influences: Back in 1976, I was detained and subsequently charged (with others) for setting up study groups to study South African politics whilst at the same time exploring alternatives to the existing order of things. During the course of the trial, the state elicited the services of an expert, Dr Stoffel van der Merwe, then senior lecturer at the Rand Afrikaans University, to support the state's claim that we were bent on overthrowing the South African state. We, in turn, called our own expert, Andre du Toit, then senior lecturer in the Political Philosophy department at Stellenbosch University, and currently professor in the Political Studies department at the University of Cape Town, to rebut the state's and van der Merwe's allegations. His evidence was delivered in such an eloquent and rigorous manner that when the prison officials granted us permission to study through UNISA, I chose majors in philosophy and political science, abandoning an accounting degree I had started, as a first step towards being a chartered accountant, in terms of, particularly, my late father's plans. This marked the beginning of an intellectual association and friendship that has survived to this day. Upon my release, I visited Andre du Toit and his family in Stellenbosch. It is in Stellenbosch, in 1982, that I was introduced to Johan Degenaar, who was head of the political philosophy department, and Andrew Nash, then a Masters student and tutor in the same department. Their commitment and seriousness did a lot to stimulate my interest in intellectual issues, and I would like to acknowldge that with gratitude. I must thank Andrew Nash, in particular, for his tireless efforts to encourage me to pursue academic and intellectual issues, without abandoning my interests in the broad liberation struggle.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
AZANYU	Azanian National Youth Union
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
BAWU	Black Allied Workers' Union
BBC	British Braodcasting Corporation
BC	Black Consciousness
BCP	Black Community Programmes
BPC	Black People's Convention
CDA	Car Distributors' Association
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CTA	Ciskei Territorial Authority
DET	Department of Education and Training
DUVCOR	Duncan Village Corporation
DVRA	Duncan Village Residents' Association
ELPTU	East London Progressive Teachers Union
ELSCA	East London Student Cultural Association
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union
JC	Junior Certificate
MDARA	Mdantsane Residents' Association
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
PAC	Pan Africanist Organisation
PTSA	Parents Teachers and Students Association

SAAWU	South African Allied Workers' Union
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAP	South African Police
SASM	South African Students' Movement
SASO	South African Students' Association
SPCC	Soweto Parents Crisis Committee
SRC	Students' Representative Council
UDF	United Democratic Front
ULPP	Unemployment Labour Preference Policy
UNISA	University of South Africa

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INTRODUCTION

In this study an attempt is made to trace and analyse the changing nature of African youth in urban areas, with particular reference to the East London locations, from the 1940s to the early 1990s (end of 1992). In common wisdom, an impression is often created that African youth is a homogeneous grouping. This has been particularly the case in the 1980s, when the youth of this country took to the streets and challenged the status quo in a manner unknown in South Africa's recorded history. However, the main conclusion of this study is that the African youth is not homogeneous, and has never been during the period under review. It will be argued that the youth divides into various categories which at times interact with one another, but are at times antagonistic to each other.

It will be stressed though, that the various categories have not remained the same. Almost all underwent various changes and transformations. Some of the changes and transformations were radical, leading to the disappearance of some categories, for example, the old distinction of 'school' and 'red' youth. Where such took place, new categories have emerged, even in instances where the intentions were to bring the various categories under the roof of a single category, for example, bringing various categories under the wing of the political youth, or **comrade (qabane)**, as was the case in the 1980s. In tracing the changing nature of African youth in urban areas, the underlying argument will be that there is no evidence of a single youth culture ever prevailing for long. This study will attempt to explain why such a culture was not possible. Only a grasp of historical process will, moreover, help to explain the changing youth scene.

The study is divided into seven related chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to East London, its locations and people in the 1940s. There are important aspects that make East London different from other South African cities like, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth. It is relatively marginal to urban South African society. It is surrounded by two impoverished homelands, the Ciskei and Transkei and white farms. It was/is a low wage city, with very few opportunities for Africans. In terms of accommodation, the latter were housed in three small locations, whose conditions were squalid and overcrowded. There were few schools and hardly any recreational facilities.

Proximity to rural areas had an influence on Africans residing in the locations. Already in the 1940s, about 70% of them were migrant workers of various kinds. Youth were in the minority; the practice was to send children to rural areas for disciplined upbringing. The rural influence makes East London different from the other cities which are far from such

areas. This is one possible explanation why the East London urban youth, especially 'tsotsis', couldn't exercise the same dominant influence as, say, the Vaal youth, who were already dominant in the 1940s and 1950s. In a nutshell, the first section provides the broader framework within which to understand the East London youth.

It is in the second chapter that an analysis of the youth as such gets underway. An enduring division amongst the youth, until the late 1970s, was the division between urban born youth and migrant youth. Given the importance of this division, the second section considers the nature and composition of the youth in both urban and rural areas. The main divisions in the rural areas in the 1940s revolved around the divisions at the point of contact of Africans with colonialists in the nineteenth century. The introduction of education and Christianity by the colonialists divided Africans into two main categories, the so-called 'school' (converts) and 'red' (traditionalists) people. Divisions amongst the youth followed similar lines. A feature of the late 1940s in particular was the drought conditions in rural areas, which compelled many Africans to the towns, including East London. The study follows the rural youth as they leave their homes to the cities. What they confronted in the cities was radically different from what they were used to.

Their own cultural forms lost much significance. Instead, there were no 'school' or 'red' distinctions. The distinction in urban areas was mainly between being born and bred in an urban area (tsotsis or bright boy) and originating from a rural area (bumpkin or **umxhaka**, whether 'school' or 'red'). Further, division in urban areas were much more complex. Students, for example, were a distinct category in their own right. The section concludes with the emergence of yet another definition of youth, the **political youth**, in the early 1950s. The political definition of youth, moreover, incorporated people in their late twenties and thirties, some of whom were married. In fact, the traditional youth, in their teens and early twenties, was excluded from this definition.

The third chapter looks at the period after the 1952 defiance campaign to the early 1960s, when political organisations were banned and members thereof arrested and forced into exile. During this period attempts were made by the state to stabilise the African population in urban areas, due to pressures from manufacturing capital. This coincided with ever deteriorating conditions in the rural areas, compelling Africans to endure and adjust to urban conditions. Unlike before, children were increasingly growing up with their parents in urban areas, thus changing the demography in favour of the youth. Up to the late 1950s, youth categories remained largely as at the beginning of that decade. The striking difference was the steady influence of the tsotsis on both rural youth and students. In the past, tsotsis were distinguished from others by their dress, particularly the narrow

bottom trousers. By the late 1950s, all urban youth, including students, dressed similarly. Moreover, uneducated youth from rural areas, in a bid to gain acceptance by the tsotsis, ended up being the worst criminals, and notorious for murdering people.

Yet despite these overlapping interests, the youth remained fragmented. The section ends with attempts by political organisations like the PAC and ANC to mobilise the youth for political involvement. Various categories of the youth began to be mobilised primarily for armed confrontation with the state. This did potentially (and superficially) represent a creation of a more uniform youth culture. It is argued, though, that this attempt at unity was of short duration. With the clampdown on political opposition, the youth reverted to their old divisions.

In the fourth chapter, we look at the youth in East London locations during the period after the successful clampdown by the state on its opposition, from about 1964. A lot of things happened in the decade or so after the clampdown. In 1957 the state resolved the housing crisis in the East London locations by taking a decision to disestablish these locations and move residents to Mdantsane, over 25 km from East London. In 1963, the first removals took place. However, by 1977, after removing about 82 000 people, there were more people in less space in the East London locations than in the late 1940s. Attempts to establish border industries were not successful enough to absorb the ever growing population both in Mdantsane and the East London locations, then popular known as Duncan Village. Nothing had been done to improve Duncan Village. In anything, there were fewer facilities as sections of Duncan Village were being demolished and people moved. For example, the only high school, Welsh, was closed in 1971 as the area under which it fell had been removed.

During the period between 1964 and 1976, the youth, by and large, reverted to its old divisions. **The phenomenon of an urban youth was becoming evident.** Not only that, more and more young people were becoming educated. A number of schools were built in Mdantsane, and a good number of pupils from Duncan Village schooled in Mdantsane. At the same time, more and more of the educated East London youth were being absorbed into the job market. However, it is argued that at the outbreak of the Soweto uprisings, the East London youth were taken by surprise by those events. But, it is further argued, the material conditions were ripe for the uprisings to be the proverbial spark that started the prairie fire: limited employment opportunities, urbanisation, diffusion of secondary school education.

Chapter five considers attempts to establish a culture dominated by the political youth. The period covered is the period between 1976 and 1985, the eve of the Duncan Village

uprisings. The most significant development during this period was the attempt, as before 1985, to bring youth of different categories under the umbrella of the political youth, this time with the youth itself being central as actors. Old divisions were mercilessly cast aside and replaced by the romantic term **comrade** or **qabane**. It was an unpardonable offence to use old categories like **umxhaka**, for example. Those categories were divisive. Workers, urban and migrant, and students were brought together in the same **youth organisations**. A new category emerged during this period, school leavers who could not get work. They too were incorporated into youth structures that mushroomed. However, it is argued that beneath the unity that was evident on the surface, there were deep divisions within the youth. There were divisions among the political youth, and there were divisions between the political youth and the tsotsis. This was the position at the outbreak of the uprisings in Duncan Village in August 1985.

The second half of the 1980s is justifiably regarded as the most volatile in South Africa's history of resistance in which the youth were pivotal in the events that took place. Various attempts were made throughout South Africa to turn townships into liberated zones. Local state structures were removed in places like Duncan Village and replaced by 'organs of people's power'. Although the state responded viciously by declaring two states of emergency within a year, resistance and defiance continued until 1990. In the sixth chapter, focus is directed at the activities of the youth during this period. Newspaper accounts, in particular, often created the impression that the youth was acting in unison. At a certain level, the political youth shared similar understandings. However, the nature of the struggles of the late 1980s, which were action orientated, gave tsotsis an opportunity to participate in the 'struggle'. Precisely because they were never involved in the youth organisation of the late 1970s and early 1980s, their agenda was different from the political youth. As a result, they were at times an embarrassment and counter productive. Lack of organisational experience, divisions amongst the youth, coupled with a vicious state machinery, led to the defeat (but not destruction) of resistance efforts in the second half of the 1980s.

The last chapter focuses on the post-1990 phase. In February 1990, de Klerk made his dramatic announcement in his opening speech in Parliament. There was initial excitement following the announcements, particularly after the unconditional release of Mandela. People, particularly the professional youth, who were afraid to involve themselves in politics suddenly jumped on the bandwagon. There was a mistaken view that de Klerk and his National Party had been defeated, and that negotiations meant negotiating the transfer of power to the ANC. However, by the end of 1990, it was becoming clear that the National Party was far from being defeated and instead a more complex transitional period was underway.

At the same time, there were some hard realities. The economic crisis was increasingly turning thousands of workers into the industrial reserve army. It was becoming evident that the few jobs that were available required educated and skilled people. Above all, negotiations meant a change in tactics, and different political actors. In the new game of talks, the youth has been marginalised. The bonds that kept various categories of the youth together in the last 15 years or so are now snapping. The youth as at the end of 1992 was deeply fragmented into distinct categories reminiscent, albeit under different conditions, of the distinct youth categories of the 1940s.

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The theme that has been taken up in this study has led to a serious limitation with the study. In this study, concentration has been almost exclusively limited to males, without any female voice. In the occasional cases where reference is made to them, it is through the male voice. The main reason for this serious omission of females is that they are marginal in terms of the issues focussed upon in the study. To do justice to them warrants a separate research project.

The methodology of the study has combined a number of techniques. The main technique was **in-depth interviews**, sometimes over two to three days on the same person. All the major interviews have been recorded. Interviewees were in almost all the cases cooperative and eager to volunteer information. Most interviews are in Xhosa, or a mixture of English and Xhosa. Interviewees who attempted to speak in English were tactfully discouraged and ended up speaking naturally, almost forgetting that they were being interviewed and taped. The author conducted all the interviews, and also has done the translation and transcribing.

The choice of interviewees has been selective. The first interviews were conducted on people that were known to the author. At the end of each interview, the author would elicit from the interviewee people who are knowledgeable who could be approached for further interviews. Further, the author was fairly familiar with some of the issues dealt with, particularly events that took place from the 1970s. This, coupled with the fact that the author was known by some of the interviewees made it possible for an open and frank exchange of views to take place, thus minimising the risk of distortions. However, there were limitations with this approach. It was not possible to get information that was considered to be incriminating. Further, information on current 'tsotsis' and **ngxungxus** is all second hand. It was extremely difficult to find people to interview from these categories.

East London people use Xhosa words in a particular way which if given their everyday meaning could lose their impact. Where use of such words has been made, they have been put either in brackets or are in bold print. The other techniques used in gaining an understanding of the people and their intentions were observations and conversations, without tape recording, particularly during the festive season, when people were in a relaxed mood and happy to entertain visitors. The above techniques were supplemented by existing literature, including newspapers. The study relies a lot on the anthropological literature, especially that associated with the leadership of Philip Mayer of Rhodes University. For the later period, the study looked at newspaper reports and makes use of the political science and economics literature.

CHAPTER 1

EAST LONDON LOCATIONS AND PEOPLE DURING THE
1940s AND EARLY 1950s.

Introduction

In this first introductory chapter, background about East London and its people will be provided. In particular, attention will be given to a description of the working and living conditions of Africans, and how these impacted on the youth. It is argued that it is by understanding the above conditions of Africans, for example, the state of recreational facilities, schools, employment, and so on, that one can gain a better understanding of the youth in African locations. The period dealt with will be the period immediately after World War II to the end of the Defiance Campaign, led by the ANC in the early 1950s. During this period, East London, like most cities in South Africa, underwent sectoral changes in the sense that the manufacturing sector established itself as the dominant sector, overtaking the primary sector.[1] At the same time, East London was unique from the rest of South Africa's cities like Johannesburg, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth in the sense that it was/is reasonably smaller than the above industrial cities,[2] and yet was/is surrounded by two impoverished bantustans, Ciskei and Transkei.[3] Another feature of this period was the election, in 1948, of the National Party to office in Pretoria and their commitment to apartheid. It is largely in reaction to the draconian laws of apartheid that the ANC decided to embark on the Defiance Campaign in 1952.

East London and its African locations

East London developed as a sea port for an agricultural hinterland. Apart from the white Border Corridor behind East London, it marketed African produce grown in what is now Ciskei and Transkei. When a railway line was introduced, commerce and trade around the railway station sprouted. The commercial sector was made up of wholesale, retail and service establishments. At the outbreak of the Second World War, there were only 88

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1   For an analysis of how this process took root in East London, see Minkley G (1992). Class and Culture in the Workplace: East London, Industrialisation and the Conflict over Work. 1945-1957. In Journal of Southern African Studies. Vol 18, December.
2   For example, as will be shown below, by 1952, East London was ranked seventh in the commercial sector, whilst manufacturing developed at a relatively slow pace.
3   Cities that come close to the East London situation are perhaps Pretoria and Durban.

wholesalers in East London, with the number growing to 145 in 1946 and 171 by 1952.[4] The retail establishment rose from 510 shops in 1947 to 600 in 1952, while service, namely hotels, agencies and so on dropped from 239 in 1947 to 236 in 1952.[5]

Up until the world depression of the 1930s, commerce had revolved around wool, hides and skins, and general produce.[6] East London established itself as the main wool port up until the early thirties but then lost this position in the Depression.[7] In 1947 East London ranked sixth as a commercial centre in the Union; by 1952 it had dropped to the seventh position, displaced by Kimberly.[8]

The dominance of trade and commerce in East London up to the end of the second world war contrasted quite sharply with the modest development of manufacturing there. Manufacturing took definite shape after the second world war. For example, in 1946, there were about 150 establishments. These establishments increased to 284 by 1954.[9] It is during these eight years that East London industry became more substantially capitalised.

Manufacturing industry developed around five main types of firms, namely, food, textiles, chemicals, transport and construction. Manufacturing industry comprised the third largest economic sector in East London and employed in 1951 14,6% of the working population.[10]

Ownership of the various establishments in all the above sectors, namely commerce and trade, farming and manufacturing was almost exclusively White. The bulk of Africans in East London were workers (including the industrial reserve army) and a handful of professionals.[11] In terms of the State influx control policy, the number of Africans permitted in East London would be determined by the extent to which their labour was required by the various sector as delineated above.

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4   Houghton HD (ed) (1960). Economic Development in a Plural Society (Cape Town:Oxford University Press), p 98.
5   Ibid. p 89.
6   Ibid. p 100.
7   Ibid. p 107
8   Ibid. p 92.
9   Ibid. p 139.
10 Ibid. p 213.
11 A breakdown of the African population in the late 1940s to the early 1950s will be dealt with in depth in the next section.

The African population of East London

East London locations were/are dominated by people whose home language is Xhosa. In the 1946 census, 33 466 Africans were recorded in the East London urban areas. By 1951, according to the census figures, 40 895 Africans were counted. Of these, about 30% of the Africans were urbanised/permanent residents. This implies that this percentage of Africans had by the late 1940's lost virtually all links with the country side. Some interviewees, though, assert that virtually all residents of the East London locations kept rural roots of some sorts and retained family there. They substantiate their claim by arguing that when things turn sour in the urban economy, those claiming to have no links with the countryside (often labelled **amatshipa**, turncoats) rediscovered those roots. Be that as it may, by 1951, there was a minority of Africans in East London who regarded themselves as fully fledged urban residents without any links with the rural areas. The majority were migrant workers, drawn from the Reserves. This category of migrant workers was a differentiated one. It ranged from temporary workers in town who were otherwise committed to rural homesteads, travelling back 'home' everyday or on weekends, to migrants who stayed permanently in town with families in the locations but who owned a house and livestock in the countryside.

Over and above the number of Africans who were legally resident in East London, be they permanent or migrant, there were Africans who lived there without the necessary legal documents. So conspicuous was this category that even the Welsh Commission, which was set up in 1949, remarked thus:

> "A large number of the Natives living in the East Bank location have no right to be in the Urban Area of East London and that they are not ordinarily employed there. One witness stated that he was of opinion that about a third of the people at the East Bank Location would fall under this description."[12]

As regards gender relationship, in 1951 women slightly outnumbered men.

As far as demographics were concerned, the 1946 census showed the following age breakdown:

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12   Welsh Commission Report (1949), p 12.

0 - 14 years 21,5%
15 - 19 years 9,5%
20 - 59 years 64,8%
60 plus years 4,2%

In 1949, Bettison, who conducted a survey of the East Bank locations, estimated children to be 26,5% of the total population, with more children of working parents living in the countryside. Bettison estimated the likely increase through this category at a third of the population.[13] In terms of the 1951 Census, however, there were only 7547 African children below the age of 15 years. The conclusion that can be drawn here is that young people below the age of 19 years were few, and largely under effective parental control.

As far as the literacy rate was concerned, 41,42% had no education at all; 20,25% had progressed no further than standard II; 32,56% varied from standard III to standard VI and only 5,65% had progressed beyond primary school level.[14]

Living Conditions for Africans

(a) Housing

In line with the discriminatory policies of white South African governments, East London residences were divided along racial lines. By the late 1940s, the majority of Africans lived in three locations.[15] The biggest was the East Bank location (521 acres); followed by West Bank location (73,5 acres) and Cambridge location (20 acres). The latter was incorporated in 1942. The West Bank location was the oldest. Although these locations were separated from the white residences and the city, they were not far away. The East Bank location, for instance, was about two miles from the city. The urban area of East London was by 1949, "some 21 637 acres; of these approximately 615 have been reserved for Native occupation."[16] In other words, Africans, who were almost as many as Whites by official count, were reserved a mere 2,8% of the entire urban area of East London.

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13 Bettison DG (1950). A Socio-economic Study of East London, Cape Province, with Special Reference to the Non-European People. Unpublished M.A. Thesis. (Grahamstown:Rhodes University), p 191.
14 Houghton (1960) op. cit. p 236.
15 A few Africans, the domestic workers (and their relatives) stayed in the White suburbs.
16 Welsh Commission Report p 2.

Conditions in these locations were overcrowded and squalid. The Superintendent of the locations registered Africans who wanted to take up residence. The qualification was that the African should be "a fit and proper person" and "lawfully employed".[17] For eligible people, a plot of ground measuring 40 by 40 feet was granted at a rental. The person concerned would then put up a structure, which he would own. According to Bettison, who was employed as a social worker in the East London locations, in the earliest days the design or construction of the dwelling was not the concern of the Council, but in 1894 the Council called for a Health Officer to carry out the provision of the Public Health Act, one of which was the regulation of overcrowding in dwellings.[18] Initially huts similar in kind to those in rural areas were built.[19] These were replaced by wood and iron structures, which, were easier to build and break up into small rooms to rent out.[20] With time, it became increasingly difficult to monitor the erection of these wood and iron structures. For the owners, they provided a welcome income in the form of rent. Already by 1925, the problem of overcrowding was manifesting itself, as is evident from the following remark by the Superintendent:

"It is evident that the sole aim of the majority of Native lease holders is ..... to continue extending their building until the site is fully built on, the object can be quite understood when it is realised that the letting of rooms is a good paying proposition... "[21]

In terms of the Housing Act of 1920 the Council accepted the principle of providing housing for the African population. However, by 1937, the Council hadn't provided any housing. In that year, the Thornton Commission of inquiry, was set up to look into the living conditions of Africans. The commission described conditions in this location as "a grave menace to the health of the location and that of the town itself."[22] In an interview in the Mayor's parlour on 28 May 1937, the chairman, Sir Edward Thornton, remarked:

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17 Bettison op. cit. p 42.
18 Ibid.
19 According to one interviewee, Ntsundu, some of the East London locations were a transposition of the countryside to town. See also Tankard KPT (1990). The Development of East London Through Four Decades of Municipal Control: 1873-1914. Unpublished Ph. D Thesis (Grahamstown:Rhodes University), Chapter 10.
20 Bettison op. cit. p 42.
21 Quoted from Bettison op. cit. p 45.
22 Quoted from Bettison op. cit. p 32.

"I knew East London in 1903-5 when in charge of the plague precautions of the government before it had a public health department. The location in those days was, equally as today, a source of very grave concern. ... My impression is (now) that the location is in a far worse condition than I anticipated ... and I think you have got a major public health problem to face ... at once."[23]

The above quotation vividly captures the extent of neglect which, until very recently, has been a feature of the East London locations.

The Thornton Commission of 1937 made, inter alia, the following recommendations:

"It is essential to reconstruct the location, in connection with which two main lines of procedure have been considered, namely:-

(a) An entirely new location on a new site;

(b) The utilisation of the present site with additions for a rebuilding scheme on town planning lines."

He went on to say:

"The second of the foregoing alternatives is regarded as the more practicable for the reasons that:-

(a) It is necessary to have the location reasonably near town in order to save Natives expense of transport, and

(b) It is desirable to make use of the services which the present location already enjoys in the way of water, sewerage, schools, churches, clinic light, offices, etc."[24]

The location that the commission was referring to was East Bank. It recommended that the wood and iron dwellings be demolished and replaced with houses built "on town planning lines".

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23 Quoted from Reader D.H. (1961). The Black Man's Portion (Cape Town:Oxford University Press), p 18.
24 Quoted from Bettison op. cit. p 32.

The response of the East London Municipality was to establish Duncan Village in 1939. By 1944, 628 houses had been completed.[25] These houses were built on a vacant piece of land, leaving the wood and iron section, contrary to the recommendations of the Thornton commission, untouched. One of the reasons why this section was not demolished was that there was no alternative accommodation for those Africans living there. The position hadn't changed in 1949, when the Welsh Commission, was established, "to inquire into the legitimate needs and grievances of the Native population in the urban area of East London in respect of the urban Native administration, housing, health, welfare, recreational facilities and scope of employment."[26]

By the time the Welsh commission was set up, the National Party was the ruling party, having won the 1948 election. In terms of apartheid policy, they were not in favour of establishing locations close to cities. There was a tension, picked up by the Welsh commission, between the National Party policy and the local state. According to the commission:

> "The proposal to move the whole location to some new site has lately been revived, but it is not officially supported by the Municipal Council."[27]

The Commission, almost echoing the 1937 Thornton Commission, identified overcrowding as one of the pressing problems requiring urgent attention. They remarked: "At present the East Bank location is grossly overcrowded." To demonstrate the extent of the problem, an incident was cited in which three houses were burnt down in the East Bank location in 1949:

> "The recent fire in the East Bank location when three houses were burnt down housed no less than 128 persons."

The above conditions, however, should not be generalised. They were "typical not of the whole location, but only of its more congested parts...."[28] To emphasise the element of neglect, Mr Godlo, who had been a member of the Native Representative Council, told the

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25   Welsh Commission Report p 5.
26   Daily Dispatch, 7 July 1949.
27   Welsh Commission Report p 19.
28   Ibid., p 18

Commission "that the East Bank location was as bad as it is now when he first settled in East London thirty years ago."[29]

A point that the Welsh Commission made, which was absent in the Thornton Commission was that the size of the East Bank location was too small to accommodate all the Africans who lived there. According to the commission:

> "Six hundred new houses have been built. All are full. Owing to litigation and other difficulties the 1 700 old houses are still in existence. They are not only full, but overflowing. In experiments hitherto it has taken five or six new houses to accommodate the inmates of one old one...... It is thus abundantly clear not only that the Duncan Village scheme will need to be supplemented, but that the existing site is wholly insufficient for the purpose."[30]

In terms of its recommendations, the Welsh Commission concurred with the Thornton Commission that the East London locations should not be disestablished. Instead, new sub-economic houses were to be built, and as they were becoming available, blocks of shacks would then be demolished. The commission solved the problem of inadequate space by recommending class differentiation amongst Africans, by the establishment of another location for better-off "economically stable" Africans:

> "Many Natives asked for freehold tenure. If this cannot be arranged, we would urge that long leases be granted to approved Natives. There is a clear need for something in the nature of a satellite township, especially for economically stable Natives, who would be less affected by the burden of transport."[31]

In other words, "economically stable Natives", according to the commission, were supposed to be provided with accommodation away from the city, since they could afford transport costs, and the less affluent Africans would remain, as the East London locations were close to the city, and thus, close to work. The commission justified their recommendation by maintaining that, a "sub-economic housing scheme was surely never intended for comparatively well-to-do Natives."[32] For migrant workers, the commission recommended hostel accommodation.

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29   Ibid., p 3.
30   Ibid., p 21.
31   Ibid., p 22.
32   Ibid., p 25.

By 1952, the year of the Defiance Campaign, very little had been done to address the problem of overcrowding and squalor. In 1950, the council agreed to embark on a housing programme, but by that time "the favourable sub-economic funds which had been available for so many years" were drying-up.[33]

(b) Health

Overcrowding and squalor, not surprisingly, had serious health implications. Infant mortality and T.B. rates were particularly high. Overcrowding and squalor were cited as the causes. In this regard, the Welsh commission commented thus:

> "We were told that if you take the respective populations of "tin-town" and "brick-town" in the East Bank location the incidence of tuberculosis is as 4.5 to 1. The East London locations have the highest rate of tuberculosis in the Union."[34]

Reverend R.J. Moore also testified that in 1949, **every third child** born in the location died. He too attributed this to "filthy streets, the absence of ordinary efforts to combat conditions which could only be the breeding places of diseases and crime." He testified that he had inspected lavatories in the location and was happy he did not have to use them.[35]

(c) Education

As regards education: According to the memorandum of the East London African Teachers Association, there were 75 teachers employed in 8 primary schools and one high school in 1949. The problem of delinquency was raised by the teachers, who suggested compulsory education as a remedy. In their words:

> "The African children attending school represented only 50 per cent of the children in the location. The other 50 per cent that were not school-going formed the flotsam and jetsam of the human wreckage that was an inevitable feature of an overcrowded location."[36]

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33   Reader op. cit. p 24.
34   Welsh Commission Report, p 31. See also Bettison op. cit., who corroborates the above.
35   Daily Dispatch, 19 July 1949.
36   Daily Dispatch, 30 July 1949.

They thus suggested that more schools be built as soon as possible by the Council.[37] They also suggested that creches and nursery schools be provided to look after infants whilst mothers were away at work.[38] Welsh High School, situated in the East Bank location, was the only high school. It had opened in 1941, and was the first non-denominational government-sponsored school and the only school with any recreational facilities. Prior to this the government gave grants to church and missionary bodies interested in education. Conditions in these missionary schools were often not conducive to good study. Firstly, the schools were overcrowded. A principal of a primary school told a field worker, Ngakane, that "every year they had to turn down large numbers of children through lack of accommodation."[39] Secondly, teaching conditions left much to be desired. Ngakane painted the picture of these schools in these gloomy terms:

"They are churches which were not planned as schools buildings and as many as eight teachers may be found all teaching in one hall and competing with his fellows to be heard by his class. There is nothing in them to attract any children. On the contrary, the conditions are repulsive."[40]

Over and above the above mentioned schools, there was also a Teacher Training College for girls up to 1952.

Employment

The immense majority of Africans in the urban areas of East London were in employment as cheap labour or unemployed. There were 12 912 employees in secondary industry in 1951. According to Hobart Houghton: "The demand for labour was increasing rapidly in East London. The whole period from 1947 to 1956 .... was one of an expanding labour market."[41] It is during this period that Africans were incorporated into skilled and semi-skilled jobs previously held by whites. "All skilled labour and practically all semi-skilled jobs were in 1939, performed by Whites, and although a few non-Whites had entered jobs

37 One of the members of the commission retorted: "They do provide schools in the reserves." (Daily Dispatch 30 July 1949).
38 Daily Dispatch, 30 July 1949.
39 Ngakane W.B. (1953). Investigation Into Case Histories of African Juvenile Delinquents in East London. South African Institute of Race Relations., p 2.
40 Ibid.
41 Houghton op. cit. p 298.

vacated by men on active service, the situation at the end of the war had not altered greatly."[42] Apart from the workers, there was a small group of shopkeepers, professional and educated people like teachers, doctors, lawyers and priests.

The development of industry in East London was not without its problems. Houghton cited in 1960 the following four constraints:

First, the failure of the City Council to pursue a vigorous policy of attracting industry in the area, for fear that industry might destroy the amenities of the city as a holiday and tourist resort.

Second, a desire to increase the White population and thus giving preference to industries that would employ Whites.

Third, the disastrous drought of 1948-9.

Fourth, the 1952 riots.[43]

Despite the above, industry developed in East London, albeit spasmodically. There was an insufficient number of White workers to fill all available jobs. In this gap stepped in African workers. Many African workers were absorbed into semi-skilled and even skilled jobs vacated by Whites. Non-white males in employment increased by only 59% between 1946 and 1954 compared to a 70% increased amongst Whites during the same period. Non-white females in wage employment were registered as increasing from 97 in 1947 to 774 in 1954.[44] The bulk of women, 96,51 per cent, were employed in services, which included domestic work. Some women were employed to scrub floors in shops and businesses as it was not customary for males to do so.[45] In sum, the African labour force increased from 6 628 Africans in industry in 1947 to 14 375 in 1956.[46] From constituting 55,9% in 1947, they constituted two-thirds of the total industrial labour force in 1956.[47] More that 66% of African males found employment in food, textiles, non-metallic minerals and construction. The latter had the biggest slice.[48]

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42   Ibid.
43   Ibid., p 142.
44   Ibid., p 140.
45   Bettison op. cit. p 133.
46   Houghton op. cit. p 152.
47   Ibid.
48   Ibid., p 217.

Apart from manufacturing industry, Africans continued working at the port and railways, jobs that were associated with married male migrant workers. Permanent residents preferred commerce, namely, shops and business. There were men, rural youth in particular, who worked in the service sector as domestic workers, especially as 'garden boys'.

Africans were paid much lower wages than their African counterparts in other industrial centres or their white counterparts in East London. Houghton noted that in East London, the incomes of White males were approximately five times those of urban African males.[49] The majority (66.86%) were classified as unskilled, 24,75% classified as semi-skilled and skilled whilst 2,77 were clerical workers. There was an informal sector of vendors of fresh food, carters, artisans, woodsellers etc. For women, beer brewing and renting out rooms were the main "informal" occupations. A commercial group of shopkeepers, home and taxi owners existed. There were also casual and unemployed workers, especially amongst the youth and women.

Further, certain kinds of jobs were preferred over others.

> "In the scale of work preferences among Xhosa men, positions as clerks, messengers, drivers, petrol-station attendants and so on rank high, and that of the heavy manual labourer rank low. In the 1951 Census the number of African men in construction was well below that in all other sectors of the economy, at a time when builders and engineers reported an acute shortage of labour. In almost all cases where heavy manual workers constituted a large proportion of the employees, managers reported high turnover of labour (a notable exception being the S.A.R)".[50]

Already at this time, the town-born youth did not fit readily into the desired categories of East London employers as workers, and unemployment, particularly amongst the juveniles, existed to a significant extent. According to Ngakane, the "only work available on a very limited scale, was gardening", which vacancies had not been filled in "partly because gardening is unpopular with urban African youth and partly because the employers preferred lads from the rural areas."[51] Employers were of the opinion that urban youth were unreliable.

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49   Ibid., p 248.
50   Ibid., p 301.
51   Ngakane op. cit. p 2.

Conclusion

Jobs, and deteriorating conditions in rural areas, brought rural migrants to town and laid the economic basis for an urban African population. Yet this population, domiciled, if not entirely yet rooted, in East London, was bitterly poor, suffered from overcrowding and appalling health conditions and enjoyed few opportunities for bettering themselves. With the coming to power of the National Party in 1948, relocation and segregation, as a solution to the above conditions dominated official thinking. By 1952, very little had been done to give serious attention to the above conditions. Black youth in the East London locations in particular, a shadowy category during this period, fitted very little in the scheme of things of the state and capital.

CHAPTER 2

YOUTH IN THE EAST LONDON LOCATIONS: 1945-52.

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the youth in the East London locations during the period 1945 to 1952. It is during this period that East London began to establish itself as a manufacturing city, opening up new employment opportunities for Africans. At the same time, large numbers of people from rural areas were flocking to East London due to drought conditions. Conditions in urban areas were often intriguing for people from rural areas. The latter were bullied by the townsfolk and tried to keep apart as a community. In this section, it will be shown that the youth as such was a fragmented grouping, made up of various categories that were not always at peace with one another. Due to the enduring division between urban born youth and migrant youth, the nature of the youth in rural areas will be explored. We will then follow them to the cities. Youth in rural areas were divided between 'school' and 'red' youth. However, in the cities, such categories did not exist. If anything new and more complex categories existed. This section will explore such categories in depth, the main purpose being to argue that even during this period, the youth was heterogeneous.

Rural background

It is common cause that the cities in the context of South Africa came about as a result of colonial conquest and dispossession. Before contact with Whites, Africans lived off the land, hunted and kept livestock. Some households were more successful than others but they were by and large an homogeneous group with gender and age the key factors of differentiation. Contact with Whites, however, resulted in two major divisions amongst Africans. In the case of Xhosa speaking Africans of the Ciskei and Transkei, the divisions manifested themselves in the form of 'Red' people (**amaqaba**) on the one hand, and 'School' people (**amagqobhoka**) on the other.[1] The former resisted White Western

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[1]   **Amaqaba** (plural) is a derogatory term used by the 'School', which has its origins to the red ochre that 'Red' people applied to their clothing. 'Red' people, in turn used the derogatory term **amagqobhoka** when referring to 'School' people to suggest that the latter 'opened a hole' to let Whites in. See Mayer P (1980). The Origin and Decline of two Rural Resistance Ideologies. In Mayer P (ed) <u>Black Villagers in an Industrial Society</u> (Cape Twon:Oxford University Press), p 8.

influence and stuck to their traditions, whilst that latter were accommodative of Western influence and values. 'School' people cherished the hope that one day they would possess the same rights as whites.[2] In battles like the War of the Axe (1846-7) and the wars of 1850-3, 'School' people, drawn mainly from the **amaMfengu** tribe fought side by side with the White colonialists against resisting 'Red' Africans.[3]

Xhosa military resistance was dealt a fatal blow with the cattle killing disaster of 1857.[4] Xhosas responded to a call to kill their stock and destroy their crops, key sources of their economy, so that the dead would arise and come to their rescue. According to Mayer:

> "The two dramatic events - the state-sponsored settlement of the Mfengu in the Ciskei and the self-destructive cattle killing of the Xhosa - were the turning points in the process of incorporation of the two people in the colonial economy and in their exposure to White ideologies."[5]

Although defeated militarily, and thus conquered politically, and compelled to labour in a colonial economy, 'Red' people continued to resist complete incorporation in terms of acceptance of Western standards in the form of Christianity and education.[6] Further they continued against overwhelming odds to maintain their traditional economy revolving around the household and based on agriculture and livestock. But the need to work in the cities proved be the Achilles' Heel which would ultimately seriously disrupt the homestead economy. In the 1940s and 1950s there were areas in the Ciskei and Transkei which were still predominantly Red. But educational institutions like Lovedale, Healdtown, St. Matthews, Mount Coke, and so on, had already been established by the missionaries and were chief instruments of incorporation. These were set up mainly in areas dominated by the **amaMfengu**, the first group to be assimilated. In other words, after more than a century after the military defeat of the 'Red' **amaXhosa** in the 1850s, some of them were still resistant to incorporation in the sense of acceptance of Western values and education.

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2   Remarks made by colonialists like Lt Col Henry Somerset to the effect that the 'School' people "would be treated in all things equal to the White people" (quoted from Mayer 1980 op. cit. p 10) kept such hopes alive. However, whites were never consistent in this regard. Such was the Cape liberal tradition.
3   For a history of the Xhosas, see, amongst others, Peires J.B. (1981). The Dead Will Arise (Johannesburg:Ravan Press); and Davenport (1987)
4   For a detailed account see Peires op. cit.
5   Mayer (1980) op. cit. p 11.
6   See Mayer P (1961). Townsmen and Tribesman (Cape Town:Oxford University Press) and Mayer (1980) op. cit.

The term 'school people' implies that education, possibly even more than Christianity, was the main instrument of incorporation that missionaries used. Yet, in some cases, some 'school people' were illiterate, but were regarded as 'school people' simply because of their dress and acceptance of Christianity. In this regard, the term **amagqobhoka** sounds more appropriate. This does not mean that the 'school' people abandoned all aspects of their traditional lifestyle. For example, some, perhaps the majority continued to live on livestock and land. Further, 'school' people continued to adhere to some of their customs and rituals, like circumcision, for example. The main difference between 'school' and 'red' people was based on acceptance or rejection of Western education and religion. The former accepted them, whilst the latter resisted and were not willing.

Colonialists, whilst bent on incorporating or assimilating 'school' people, were never clear about their goals. It is possible to detect two lines of thinking amongst them. One line of thinking argued for the complete integration of 'civilised' Africans, the African elite. This view was represented, amongst others, by Govan of Lovedale. His view was that education

> "would help to fully integrate Africans and enable them to take their place alongside the Europeans."[7]

His successor, Stewart, though, had a different agenda. He was opposed to the policy of full integration. In the words of Mayer, he "wanted to make Lovedale products useful both to colonial society as labourers and workers, and to their own people as preachers and teachers."[8]

These two contending views about the status of Africans who accepted Western ways of living was to dominate South African politics, black and white, for decades to come. Successive white governments in South Africa after Union in 1910, battled to have a consistent policy on the status of Africans who wanted to be part of the South African system. The African elite has always entertained the hope that in the end they would be accepted as equals with their White counterparts. At the same time, in terms of their material conditions, they were far from being treated as equals. In 1948, with the coming to power of the National Party, hopes of equality with the white man were dashed.

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7   Quoted from Mayer (1980) op. cit. p 12.
8   Ibid. p 13.

In a nutshell, the position by the 1940s was that Africans in the rural areas of the Ciskei and Transkei were divided into broadly two categories, the 'Red' people and the 'School' people. However, there were indications that both these two categories were being shaped by the influences of urban life, through the experiences of migrant workers. The movement of boys and young men between the urban and rural areas was becoming the norm. But, despite the above, 'Red' people, during this period, were still clinging to their values and resisting western values. 'School' people, on the other hand, were by and large entertaining hopes of acceptance by Whites as equals.

Youth in rural areas

Traditional African society at the time of contact with whites revolved around the homestead (**umzi**), consisting of an extended family with at least two generations of adults.[9] The mode of production, which revolved around the homestead, was based on elementary agriculture, hunting and livestock. The homestead was kept together by adhering to a tight ancestor religion, respect for seniors and a rigid hierarchical discipline. Supreme power, including economic power, rested with the senior male in the family. The nature of the homestead made it almost impossible for subordinate members of the homestead to assert their independence. This is arguably the main reason why it was possible to maintain the rigid discipline which characterised traditional African society.

By the 1940s, the traditional homestead was changing. The first major disruption, as already stated, occurred with the introduction of Christianity and education by the missionaries, resulting in the emergence of the 'Red' and 'School' dichotomy. The second major disruption came with the migratory labour system. The 'Red' people managed to resist the influence of Christianity and education. What they could not avoid was migrant labour, and thus contact with urban areas. In the 1940s, though, Xhosas were still divided into the broad categories of 'Red' and 'School' people, though it was becoming evident that 'Red' communities were on the decline.[10] But the process was gradual and uneven.

A chief feature of traditional society which was retained by 'Red' people was the division of society in terms of age, each age group having its own 'laws', expectations and procedures.

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9   Ibid. p 40. Apart from Mayer, see Wilson (nee Hunter) M (1936). Reaction to Conquest: effects of contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa (London:Oxford University Press).
10   Mayer (1980) op. cit. p 41.

For example, for men, the various stages ranged from childhood, boyhood, which ended with circumcision, then young manhood, which is divided into broadly two stages, **ubukrwala** (the stage immediately after circumcision and **ubufana** (young man) and mature manhood (**ubudoda**). With respect to women, the stages divided into basically childhood, girlhood (junior and senior girls) and, with marriage, womanhood. Each stage had its expectations, norms and practices that were rigidly adhered to and enforced.[11]

Youth (**ulutsha**) among the **amaXhosa** thus meant the stages from childhood to marriage for females and childhood to young men (**abafana**) for males. For males, boyhood, the stage between childhood (up to the early teens) and circumcision (late teens and early twenties), was the first major stage. This stage was characterised by a "carefree and irresponsible" way of living.[12] For the 'red' youth recreational activities centred around week-end gatherings called **imitshotsho**, where both boys and junior girls (early teens) would come together. Junior girls would sing and clap their hands whilst the boys danced. Initiated young men and senior girls'[13] week-end meetings were called **intlombe**.

A key feature of these week-end overnight gatherings was that there were no old people to monitor them.[14] One would thus expect that the fact that these activities were taking place at night, without supervision from adults, there would be chaos and irresponsibility resulting in the pregnancy of the girls. Yet, this was not the case. If anything, these gatherings were accepted and seen as important institutions for the socialisation of boys, young men and girls. According to Mayer, they were the "schools of Red children".[15] There were set rules of behaviour at these gatherings. For example, sex and fighting were encouraged amongst the youth. But there were rules governing these. The rule governing sex, for example, was to practice external sexual intercourse (**ukumetsha**).[16] With regard to boys' stick fighting, rules debarred hitting a fallen opponent. On the whole, 'Red'

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11   See Mayer P (1972). Report of Research on Self-Organisation by Youth among Xhosaspeaking Peoples of the Ciskei and Transkei (Rhodes University: Institute of Social and Economic Research) (Two Volumes).
12   Mayer (1980) op. cit. p 45.
13   Males attending these gatherings included men who had undergone circumcision up to married men in their mid-thirties. Senior girls' ages ranged from roughly 15 years to early twenties. See also Mayer (1980) op. cit. p 45.
14   See Mayer (1972) op. cit.
15   Mayer (1980) op. cit. p 45.
16   Control over women's labour was an important source of wealth for men. Upon marriage, a bride-price, in the form of cattle, called **lobola**, was paid to the family of the bride. The virginity of the girl was taken seriously evaluating prospects of marriage. Girls giving birth out of wedlock were marginalised and alienated.

people, despite differences in terms of wealth, were culturally homogeneous. Parental wealth did not invest any special status on the 'Red' youth. Age was arguably the only discriminating factor. A boy was a boy irrespective of the family's financial circumstances.

With regard to the 'School' youth, the situation was not the same. 'School' people themselves were a heterogeneous group, ranging from illiterate people to professionals like teachers, priests and so on. The only thing that brought them together was their acceptance of Western education and religion. The same differentiation was reflected in the composition of their youth. 'School' people continued to rear livestock and work their land. Traditionally, it was the task of boys to look after livestock, a process that affected those who looked after livestock. Given the fact that the grazing fields were common meeting ground for all boys looking after livestock, both 'school' and 'red' youth ended up playing sticks together. However, 'school' boys did not attend the week-end activities (imitshotsho) of the 'red' youth.[17] Some parents ensured that the schooling of their children was not affected by the need to rear livestock. Some of these children ended up attending secondary schools away from their homes. They were called 'senior students' (amasinala). They looked down upon the youth associations of 'Red' youth. For example, the practise of metsha, that is, sex short of penetration, practised by the 'Red' youth, was viewed by the 'School' youth as old-fashioned and untidy.[18] There was no formalised passing on of traditional lore among the youth of 'school' people. Consequently, whatever values older people held could not be structurally transmitted to the young. Teenage pregnancies, in the absence of family planning or such counselling, were the first signs of the collapse of the social fibre of 'school' people.

The rejection of the 'Red' youth organisation by the 'School' youth did not mean that the latter had no organisations at all. For example, on Sundays, after the church service, 'School' youth they had their "'Christian meetings' (intlanganiso) or Parliaments (ipalamente)".[19] Activities in these gatherings centred around singing, jiving and tea parties "and created at first a suitable environment for the young to find marriage partners."[20] The influence of not only the missionaries, but also urban areas is evident. By the 1940s, for instance, sport, for example, cricket, was played by rural 'school' youth working and studying in urban areas.[21]

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17   The above information was gathered in conversations with old men at an initiation ritual in Tsomo, Transkei, on 19 December 1992.
18   The School youth's alternative, of course, led to pre-marital pregnancies.
19   Mayer (1980) op. cit. p 33.
20   Ibid. p 33.
21   Interview with Banqo 2/1/92.

Circumcision marked a crucial stage in the development of males amongst the **amaXhosa**. As intimated above, despite the week-end gatherings, which were fulfilling an important socialisation function, boyhood was characterised by a "carefree and irresponsible" lifestyle. It was generally accepted that boys were mischievous, for example, liked fighting, beating women and generally were troublesome. At a certain stage, especially during the adolescent stage, boys would undergo circumcision and be introduced to the responsible life of men. After circumcision, which culminated with an admonition ceremony where the young man was introduced to the world of men by both young and senior men, it was not expected that the young man would behave like a boy. For example, he would immediately desist from attending **imitshotsho**, the week-end gatherings of boys. Instead, he would attend **intlombe**, the week-end gathering of young men.[22] Further, for young men, and men generally, fighting was discouraged. The saying went something like: "'Boys settle things by the stick' but 'men settle things by law' or 'by words'".[23] The week-end gathering for young men (**intlombe**) was the school where young men were taught the law and how to enforce it. It should be noted that circumcision was adhered to by both the 'school' and 'red' people.

By the 1940s, there was evidence that the Reserves were overpopulated and were degenerating into rural slums.[24] Drought conditions, particularly in 1945 and 1949, led to a situation where rural production was far below subsistence levels. The combination of all these factors led to a situation where boys and young men, (and later girls and women), resorted to the cities and urban areas for work to sustain a failing rural existence. It is these factors that proved to be the last straw that broke the back of the homestead, and with it the organisation and discipline associated with it.

Releasing certain members of the family to the cities meant that the senior head of the family could not have complete control over the wages of the member concerned.[25] Mayer, however, suggests that the pull of rural life was such that 'Red' boys and young men

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22 A girl going out with the young man would automatically be promoted to a senior girl, in which case she wouldn't be expected to go out with boys.
23 Quoted from Mayer (1980) op. cit. p 46.
24 The Keiskammahoek study, for example, revealed that about 35% of the population of a Ciskei district had emigrated by 1950. See Mayer (1980) op. cit. p 37.
25 Writing mainly about Pondoland, Beinart notes that in the early days of migrancy in Pondoland, "homestead heads attempted to control the wages of those who went to work, ..." Beinart W (1982). The Political Economy of Pondoland: 1860 to 1930 (Johannesburg:Ravan Press), p 4

were eager to return to their rural origins. In fact, when it became evident that labour migrancy could not be avoided, the importance of the homestead, especially the notion of associating success with 'building the homestead', was emphasised. For example, a constant theme during the admonishing ceremony, the culmination of the initiation ritual, was a warning to young men not to abandon the homestead. Further, boys and young men were warned about the cities. According to Gxara:

"We were told a lot about the cities. The majority of people in our area worked in East London. In the cities, we were told, there were people called **tsotsis** (they were called **oolayita** during those days.) We were told that they wore caps, stabbed people and we were warned to avoid them. We knew a lot about the cities well before we went to them."[26]

Those who ended up being absorbed by the cities were derogatorily dubbed turncoats (**amatshipha**).

Another factor which could have made the cities less attractive were its conditions, especially overcrowding and the conditions under which children were brought up, which made it difficult for parents to have control over them. Further, with property laws debarring Africans from owning land in urban areas, there were no prospects of 'building the homestead' in the cities.

However, contact with the urban areas did not leave the 'Red' people unaffected. 'Red' people, and people from rural areas as such, were looked down upon by those born and bred in the cities. In order to survive, they had to adjust to the conditions of city life. As will be clear in later pages, often 'Red' men ended up imitating criminals or 'tsotsis' in urban areas. Further, as the rural mode of production was collapsing and capitalism dominating, especially during and after the second world war, with the rise of manufacturing, 'Red' people felt insecure. During this period, a few Africans started occupying semi-skilled and skilled work, which was less strenuous and better paying. These Africans were drawn from those who were educated, the 'School' people. According to Mayer, some were becoming "aware of the rise of a seemingly professional class from the ranks of the school people".[27] Consequently, some 'Red' people were, by the 1940s and

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26   Interview with Gxara 2/1/92.
27   Mayer (1980) op. cit. p 47.

1950s beginning to re-assess their position, particularly the role of education in securing a better job.

In sum, one witnesses a situation where traces of the 'Red' culture still existed, but under more stressful and challenging conditions. An important observation made by Mayer was that periods of absence in the urban areas made it difficult for youth leaders to play their traditional roles.[28] The longer the periods at work, the less the weekend meetings became effective, thus crippling a central tool of socialisation in the 'Red' way of living. On the one hand, serious attempts were embarked upon to resist assimilation. Further, the ambiguous and ambivalent policies of whites towards Africans helped to sustain the 'Red' culture even under such stressful conditions. For example, perhaps 75% of Africans during this period continued to do completely unskilled work, with the result that education was not really decisive. This prompted 'Red' people to pass remarks like: "As long as you can move fast, education does not count here."[29]

On the other hand, contact with the cities, at a time when the rural economy was collapsing, had a growing influence on the 'Red people'. Far-sighted people, including 'Red' people, understood that a new period which recognised the value of education was painfully being born. Some 'Red' people started sending their children to school in preparation for work in a white dominated South African capitalist economy. According to Gxara:

"The children of those few ended up associating with children of the school people. Such children would end up being school people when they grew old."[30]

As stated, rural youth, both 'school' and 'red' had, by the 1940's started the journey to the cities as migrant workers. In what follows, we shall see how both categories adjust to city conditions, with particular reference to East London.

Childhood and Youth in the East London locations.

Divisions amongst the youth in the cities was much more complex than the simple divisions of the rural areas, as outlined above. Whereas in the rural areas two categories of the

28 Ibid. p 50.
29 Quoted from Mayer (1980) op. cit. p 47. In fact, as will be clear in the study, employers in urban areas preferred to employ Africans from the rural areas.
30 Interview with Gxara 2/1/92.

youth dominated, namely, 'school' and 'red', the urban areas had more than two youth categories. For example, there were students, workers, 'tsotsis', vagabonds, and so on. Further, these youth categories were different from those in the rural areas. There were no such categories as 'school' and 'red' in the urban areas. The tendency was to lump all people from rural areas, whether 'school' or 'red' under one category, namely, 'bumpkins' (**imixhaka**). In what follows, a deeper analysis of the various youth categories in the urban areas of East London will be made. It will be argued that a feature of these categories is their **fragmentation**, each category being a distinct category from the others. We will draw the discussion to a close by focussing on the events of 1952, when the ANC led a defiance campaign through out South Africa, which in the context of East London ended up with the November 'riots'. The role of the youth (**ulutsha**) will be assessed. It will be argued that the involvement of the youth was minimal during the Defiance Campaign, but not during the riots. Further, it will be argued that though the youth played a prominent role in the 'riots' themselves, they could not sustain their activities precisely because they were a numerically small and fragmented group. The small number of the youth in urban areas at the time was due to the fact that many were sent to rural areas for proper upbringing, under the authority of grandparents.[31] Furthermore, East London boys used rather to migrate to the mines until after circumcision. Very young migrants to East London were usually girls.[32]

(a)   Migrant youth

It is mainly 'school' youth that migrated to the cities of East London, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town. The majority of their 'red' counterpart, especially boys, went to the mines. Some, however, ended up seeking work in East London. It is mainly those who ended up in East London that the study will concern itself with. Some came from areas close to East London. This made it possible for them to go home every week-end, thus retaining strong links with their rural roots. Mvulane recalled that:

"Those who came from rural areas, that is boys from rural areas in the main, used to play concertina and carry sticks, play with sticks even in the township. They would go home during week-ends and we were told that they played sticks and attended their social gatherings called **imitshotsho**."[33]

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31   See Bettison op. cit. and Mayer (1961) op. cit.
32   Interview with Mgcina 23/3/92.
33   Interview with Mvulane 13/9/90.

Yet, there were those who came from the Transkei, for instance, and could not visit their homes on a regular basis, given transport problems and the poor roads. For the latter category, including the youth, it meant that week-ends were spent in the urban areas, and thus longer periods of absence from home.

Newcomers who had not left their homes before, experienced city life for the first time. Things like lights, streets, robots, cars, machines, multistorey buildings and so on were new to all. Further, they were on the whole treated the same by the urban born youth. It is this alienation and isolation that led to the establishment of groups of 'home boys' (**abakhaya**).[34] This is how a migrant worker relates their attitude to the cities before being forced to work in them:

> "We feared the cities. We would not travel through the town, we would walk on the outskirts. We were afraid of cars in particular. In the countryside there were no cars. The other thing we were afraid of were the police. We used to run away upon sight of a policeman, even if we knew we had not done anything wrong. Our parents used to warn us about the police."[35]

As indicated, those born and bred in the urban areas and some of those who had already adjusted to urban conditions looked down upon migrants. The latter were dubbed 'bumpkins' (**imixhaka**), and were bullied by the former. Consequently, migrants tended to isolate and marginalise themselves and avoided associating with people born and bred in urban areas. Mayer emphasizes that the notion of resistance to Western influence by 'Red' people to explain why 'Red' migrants in particular grouped together.[36] This study, whilst in full agreement with Mayer, argues that the treatment of rural youth by the urban youth is equally important. In the words of Gxara:

> "I used to be in the company of people I knew and schooled with. We went together to look for part-time jobs."[37]

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34   See Mayer (1961) op. cit. With regard to Cape Town, see, Wilson M & Mafeje A (1961). Langa (Cape Town:Oxford University Press).
35   Interview with Gxara 2/1/92. Gxara came from the ranks of 'School' in the district of Peelton.
36   Mayer (1961) op. cit.
37   Interview with Gxara 2/1/92.

There were, however, some who were attracted by urban life, and wanted to permanently escape the dreariness of rural life.[38] They sought ways and means of being accepted. According to Gxara:

"In fact, it is this division between growing up in a rural and urban setting that made people from the countryside end up being **tsotsis**. They wanted to graduate from being **bumpkins (abaxhaka)** to being **tsotsis**. The minute you stabbed, you would no longer be classified a **bumpkin** any longer. A **bumpkin** was a person coming from the countryside, carrying sticks, and lost in the city."[39]

Migrants, however, had various ways of protecting themselves against urban influences.

"Those of us who had a rural background had this advantage that we were united and guarded each other. We would trace the origins of a person and link him up with his home boys. We would try to find work for him. If he is spendthrift, we would keep his money. In this way he would reform. We never allowed a person to have money whilst not employed."[40]

Not everyone was willing to be subjected to that kind of discipline. This was especially the case with those who had made up their minds that they were no longer interested in going back to their rural origins. They adjusted to city conditions and immersed themselves in what was happening:

"Those who lived by their wits avoided us. They ran away from us. They ended up not returning to their homes in the rural areas. They were often not progressive. It would be difficult for them to have even a wife. Some slept in the bush and lived from hand to mouth. There are people, even now, who do not want to work, who spend years not working. Some were not working because they wanted certain kinds of jobs... It is those who come to the cities, get to know them and get into the habit of not wanting to work. They ended up playing dice and so on. Most of the people who claim to be born and bred here are in fact those people who left their homes and hide their origins."[41]

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38 Houghton op. cit. p 89.
39 Interview with Graxa 2/1/92.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.

Youth born and bred in urban areas

The appalling socio-economic conditions of East London locations, under which the urban born youth grew, have already been dealt with above. What needs to be brought to light now is the nature of the African family in urban areas during this period, in order to complete the picture under which children and the youth in urban areas grew up.

A feature of the family in urban areas was that, like the youth, it assumed various forms. Unlike the typical extended family form characterizing rural families, various family forms existed in urban areas by the 1940s. For example, longer periods in the urban areas, away from their wives, tempted some migrant males to start love relationships with women already resident in the cities. Some migrants ended up forsaking their wives in the rural areas for women in the cities. In some cases, these men became 'turncoats' (**amatshipha**), ending up staying with concubines, which were often loose and unreliable associations. On the other hand, some women whose migrant husbands neglected them and established love relations in urban areas ended up migrating to the urban areas. According to Bettison, there was between 1926 and 1936 a noticeable influx of African women.[42] Such women usually had very little to attract them in the countryside and ended up living permanently in the cities, with a possibility of setting up new relations in the urban areas. In the majority of cases, with hardly any family planning available at the time, these love relations ended with pregnancies. In most cases, the nature of these love relations was such that they were not permanent. Often, after bearing the child, (in some cases, even during pregnancy) the mother would be abandoned by her lover, leading to a growing number of children without supporting fathers. In the case of concubinage, the child would most likely be supported by the 'father'. But these relations, too, hardly lasted for long periods. For example, the migrant 'father', even if a 'turncoat' might decide to go back 'home' in the rural areas. In some cases, the relationship would simply come to an end. It was not uncommon to witness cases where the 'father' would desert both mother and child, leaving the woman to struggle and bring up the child as a single parent. Given the fact that during this period, the labour markets were not absorbing women, except as low paid domestic workers, the burden on such women was severe.[43] Some of these women made a living as vendors, beer brewers, all struggling to make ends meet. A tiny minority were professionals, like nurses and teachers.

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42   Bettison op. cit. p 190.
43   All the older interviewees, for example, Gxara, Mgcina, said similar things about the rise of single parents, apart from professionals like nurses and teachers.

The 1949 Welsh commission made a shrewd observation about the housing implications of these "irregular attachements":

> "Unfortunately there is to-day a prevalence of irregular attachments between Native men and women. The housing of these imposes an undue burden upon the municipal authorities and increases the difficulty of orderly administration."

For purposes of this study, though, the appropriate question is: What were the effects on the child?

Children born under these stressful conditions could hardly get any parental attention. However, in cases where the mother had relatives in the countryside, the child would be sent to the rural areas to be looked after by the grandparents and absorbed into the family of the mother.[44] It should be pointed out that even married couples resident in urban areas used to send their children to the countryside for upbringing. Unsanitary conditions and overcrowding, coupled with the general lack of parental control in the urban areas, did not make the latter conducive to bringing up children in a disciplined manner reminiscent of the countryside. The rural areas, on the other hand, with their extended families and grandparents, continued to provide a healthy environment for bringing up the child.[45] There were, however, children who were born and bred in the urban areas. They were born of permanent residents in urban areas, who no longer had any strong links with the rural areas and grew up in the locations. Their family circumstances ranged from single parents to married couples.[46]

The rise of the single parent was already very visible in East London in the 1940s. There were, however, also cases, though few, of stable married families, often having links with relatives in both rural and urban areas.

In a nutshell, youth in urban areas grew up under severe socio-economic conditions and under variable and sometimes very difficult family circumstances.

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44 See Mayer (1961) op. cit.
45 See Mayer (1980) op. cit.
46 With deteriorating conditions in the rural areas, some married couples resident in urban areas preferred to stay and bring up their children in the urban areas. See interview with Mgcina 23/3/92.

Non-school going and unemployed youth

Youth born and bred in urban areas divided into various categories. Education, work and socio-economic factors seem to have influenced the nature of the various categories. For example, there was a large category of the youth born and bred in urban areas that was not schooling, not working, exposed to slum conditions and a broken family. This group, according to evidence submitted to the 1949 Welsh Commission, represented about half the youth of East London locations. In terms of a memorandum submitted by the East London African Teachers' Association to the 1949 Welsh Commission, there were 3 000 children in primary schools, representing "only about 50 per cent of the children in the location". There were few schools to absorb the children of East London locations, something that could curb juvenile delinquency and children roaming in the streets.[47] Welsh High School was the only institution catering for older children. A large number got refused admittance every year.[48] There were no vocational schools to train Africans largely due, inter alia, to opposition by White trade unions.[49]

Not only were these youths not schooling, they were also not employed. We have seen above that there was hardly any work available to the 15-19 age group. Available work was unattractive, hard, unskilled manual work in the docks, construction and on the railways. Even in the best years, there was reported to be a large number of unemployed young African males in the already overcrowded locations of the East London urban areas. Unemployment was high amongst the youth. For example 48,98% of the unemployed were under the age of 30 years and almost three quarters were under the age of 40.[50]

There were, of course, other reasons why some of the children born and bred in urban areas were not schooling. Chief amongst them was the fragmented nature of some families. Further, some pupils left school because teachers subjected them to corporal punishment, something that some youth couldn't bear.[51] It was often difficult for single mothers to force their male children to attend school.

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47 Bettison op. cit. p 192.
48 Ibid.
49 Houghton op. cit. p 303.
50 Ibid. p 236.
51 All the interviewees endorsed this view. The drop out rate was high both in rural and urban areas.

Iingxungxu

Those who did not go to school and lacked steady work can be divided into various categories. There was a group of casual workers that was referred to as **iingxungxu** (literally a person who is temporary). According to an interviewee, Bhele:

"These people used to do casual work at the golf course. There was another group who assisted white females at the fruit and vegetable market in town. This group didn't associate with the enlightened urban youth."[52]

According to Bhele, who proceeded from the basis that this category referred to anyone who does casual work, the above category was mixed:

"The group I talked about that didn't go to institutions and was born in the townships, do not forget, was already a mixed group. I talked about casual workers (**iinguxungxu**). These were not necessarily non-school going youth. Some students took casual jobs after school and week-ends. They mixed with the other group of non-school going youth. You see, if I remember well, I don't think I am making a mistake, as from 1949 [the drought], it became common for people to leave rural areas for the towns. Things were bad at the time because of the introduction of labour restrictions, requiring passes to get work."[53]

But there is another, more derogatory meaning to the term **ingxungxu**. It refers to people who want things the easy way, who are not inclined to work on a permanent basis, hence, **ukungxungxa**, meaning to be "permanently" temporary. Gxara shares this notion of a **ngxungxu**:

"There are people, even now, who do not want to work, who would spend years not working. Some were not working because they wanted certain kinds of jobs. If a job, for example, was not paying well, they would not work there."[54]

Other interviewees were also convinced that some did not want to work. Most interviewees were convinced that the majority in this category did not want to work, largely because they

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52   Interview with Bhele 8/10/90. The 'enlightened urban youth' referred to here are those young people who passed standard six and were working. See below.
53   Interview with Bhele 8/10/90.
54   Interview with Gxara 2/1/92.

enjoyed the adventurous location life. They preferred to work on a casual basis. They were indirectly influential, particularly amongst students and the migrant youth.

Whatever the difficulty involved in understanding this category, there seems to be general agreement that this category during this period was understood to be making a living by selling its labour power on a casual basis in order to make a living. This category was different from those, most of whom were born and bred in urban areas, who made their living by resorting to crime of sorts. This category was known as the **tsotsis**.

Tsotsis

In terms of their origins in East London, this is what Bhele recalls:

> "There was a group of **tsotsis**. I do not recall when **tsotsism** became a problem. But it started through a fashion of pairs of trousers with a narrow bottom, and this fashion was taken up by the **tsotsis**. The name emanates from that pair of trousers."[55]

This seems to be a widely held view of the origins of this category. Some people think that the term referred to people who dressed attractively. Whatever the differences, what seems clear is that the term was associated with dress of one kind or another.

Apart from identifying them by their dress, it was possible to generalise about their education background; they either never went to school or dropped out at an early stage of their schooling, and not reaching standard six. According to Bhele:

> "They were a distinct group and most of them used to be those who left school at standard 4 and 5. Some did not even go to school because their parents were working, leaving them behind thinking they would go to school. Some of these children didn't go to school and this group grew and was regarded as **tsotsis**. They were a distinct group ...."[56]

The question must arise: Given the fact that they were neither schooling nor working, and living in a cash economy, how, then, were they surviving? Where did they get money from? The majority lived by foul, criminal means.

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55   Interview with Bhele 8/10/90.
56   Interview with Bhele 8/10/90.

"Tsotsis survived by shop-lifting. They were a group that didn't want to work, surviving through foul means like robbery and so on."[57]

According to Gxara, some of those who were not working were involved in pick-pocketing and robbery. According to him, they were called **oolayita** (later called **tsotsis**).[58]

Tsotsis bullied rural youth and people from rural areas generally. The rural youth, at the same time, were fearful of **tsotsis**, opening themselves to abuse. The extent of the animosity between these two categories is expressed by Mvulane thus:

"Here in the township they (rural youth) were afraid of the township born youth. Most township born youth who did not attend school invariably ended up joining the **tsotsi**/ gangster ranks. The latter group carry knives - these are their sticks..... When the two groups met, they fought, with the township youth bullying rural boys calling them 'country bumpkins (**imixhaka**). The township youth, those who were not students and not working were naughty (**stout**). In most cases they were pick-pocketers."[59]

It is by and large the above treatment that compelled some of the migrant youth to adjust to township conditions--especially those who could not or did not return home frequently. According to Mvulane:

"When migrant youth came to town, they changed their life style, they dressed like urban youth, stopped carrying sticks as this made them targets for attack. In some cases they used the urban youth language."[60]

Gxara was more severe:

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57 Idem.
58 La Hausse traces the origins of the **amalaita** gangs to migrant workers adapting to an urban setting in Durban. In this regard, see La Hausse P (1990). 'The Cows of Nongoloza': Youth, Crime and Amaliata Gangs in Durban, 1900-1936. In Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol 16, No 1, March, p 77. This group would then be different from **tsotsis**, whose roots are often associated with youth born and bred in urban areas. In terms of the accounts of interviewees in this study, the two terms are almost interchangeable.
59 Interview with Mvulane 13/9/90.
60 Idem.

"It is those who come to the cities, get to know it and get into the habit of not wanting to work. They ended up playing dice and so on. Most of the people who claim to be born and bred here are in fact those people who left their homes and hide their origins."[61]

In this regard, 'tsotsis' were influential on the migrant youth. Some of the latter ended up becoming **tsotsis** themselves. The general opinion is that they became worse than urban born youth.

"As I saw them, they were originally from the countryside. They were not educated.... People coming from the countryside get to be familiar with the cities and once they become familiar with it they get into the city habits. The problem is that they tend to exaggerate things and end up being the worst **tsotsis**.[62]

In terms of size and impact, it seems that **tsotsis** in East London were not as influential and pervasive as on the Rand, for example. Further, it should also be remembered that during this period, the youth as such was numerically small. All the interviewees agreed that there was no organised crime in East London during this period. Be that as it may, there were incidents of crime. For example, stabbing, in terms of Gxara, was rife:

"Stabbing became serious when liquor became freely available, that is when the trouble started...... East London could be on a par with Johannesburg when it came to stabbing.[63] Once again people in this category were not educated." [64]

Mvulane was not quite sure how to explain the position during this period:

"The **tsotsi** element in East London was not sophisticated as such. But the way people were murdering each other! There was a high murder rate.... People were murdered, pick-pocketed, there was shoplifting and burglaries in town. There were in those days no Africans owning businesses, except cafes."[65]

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61 Interview with Gxara 2/1/92.
62 Idem. The general attitude of the interviewee was that no one can claim to be born and bred in the urban areas. The origins of everybody, according to him, are in the rural areas.
63 Given the opinions of other interviewees, and people I conversed with in general, this seems to be an exaggeration.
64 Interview with Gxara 2/1/92.
65 Interview with Mvulane 13/9/90.

To understand the above tension, one needs to understand who the **tsotsis** targeted. Apart from robberies and burglaries involving white people, the main target of **tsotsis** in the townships, it seems, was youth from rural areas **(imixhaka)**. The former also attacked people from rural areas as such. Given the fact that East London locations were dominated by people with a rural origin, **tsotsis**, being a relatively small group, had to be careful in choosing their targets. They tended to attack those who were fresh from the rural areas and were not known as yet. Gxara is clearer on this point:

> "It was possible, despite the stabbings, to move around even at night when once one got to know the place. The size of the East London locations was such that it became possible for people to know each other. **Tsotsis** bullied and robbed **bumpkins** fresh from the countryside. The latter were often robbed and left to go without being killed....... Men were respected, it was rare for them to be attacked except for the **bumpkins** who they would rob. Mischief, stabbing and stone throwing were done by boys."[66]

Tsotsis had a habit of fighting amongst themselves. In most cases they fought over women, for control of territories, and deciding who the reigning **boss** was. Unlike in rural areas, where such issues were resolved by stick fighting, 'tsotsis' used the knife instead. They stabbed each other to death at times.

> "**Tsotsis** used to stab each other when drunk and over women. They even killed each other. There was a chap who was known by all and sundry that was a 'boss'. He stabbed a lot. He carried a stick and came from the rural areas, but he also stabbed. He was eventually stabbed to death himself."[67]

Most ended up whiling their time away with dagga, gambling, theft on the market square and so on.[68] By the late 1940's, there were reports that juvenile delinquency in the form of gambling, theft and other immoral acts, was on the increase.[69]

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66   Interview with Gxara 2/1/92.
67   Idem.
68   Idem.
69   See Bettison op. cit. p 194.

Oobrighty

However, there was a small section of 'tsotsis' who were not violent and criminal. They were called the 'bright boys' (**oobrighty**). They were 'tsotsis' in the sense that they were born and bred in East London, and were thus not **imixhaka**. Further, they were not educated in the sense that they did not have a standard six certificate, at least. In this regard, they fitted the general definition of 'tsotsis'. However, unlike the criminal 'tsotsi', they did not rob, neither did they stab, except in self-defence. They dressed well, and followed the fashion. Their main activities were going to the cinema and running after women. They relied for sustenance on parents, who were often single landladies and beer brewers.[70]

<u>Students</u>

By the early 1950s, East London locations had six primary schools, one high school accommodating about 350 students and a newly established teacher training college for girls which was destroyed during the 1952 riots, and was never re-opened. Almost all the schools were run by churches. The buildings themselves were owned by the various churches. With the introduction of Bantu Education in the mid 1950s, these mission schools were phased out completely.

Not all the pupils and students of East London schools were born and bred there. For example, Mvulane, who was born in Nqamakwe, Transkei, stayed with his aunt in East London when his father passed away and there was no one to look after him. He continued his schooling, starting in standard 5, in East London. This was in 1948, and he was 12 years old at the time.[71] Almost half of the students were from outside East London, as is shown by the memorandum of the East London African Teachers' Association submitted to the Welsh Commission:

"About one quarter of the 3,000 school-going children in the primary schools and about half the children attending the Welsh High School came from the adjacent Native reserves. They lived with relatives or with people who were paid for their board and lodging."[72]

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70   Interview with Mgcina 23/3/92.
71   Interview with Mvulane 13/9/90.
72   Daily Dispatch 30 July 1949.

Unlike the **imixhaka** in the location, school going youth from rural areas did not seem to encounter problems of acceptance by fellow students. According to Mvulane:

"We grew up well in the township, playing together. These townships were not very big. Yes, if you were schooling in the township, you met other students. Our schools were more or less in the same area. There used to be tournaments and we grew up knowing each other. That made it possible for me to be used to the township and know people there too."[73]

Students, like the 'tsotsis', were a distinct group, with their own activities. They were a class conscious category, not relating to the 'tsotsis' but with former students who had passed standard six. A person with a standard six certificate was respected. They would not be considered as 'tsotsis' or as 'ngxungxus'; even if they were not working.

"Students had their own activities, like tournaments. Girls played netball. After school students went home or practice sport. Boys liked rugby, which was very popular. Welsh High School students attended studies in the afternoon. Those that we referred to as **tsotsis** didn't have such activities. They didn't participate in sport. People who participated in sport are those who left school at, say Form 1 or so and were good in sport. Those would continue playing sport even after leaving school. Rugby was the most popular sport."[74]

The above view is endorsed by Gxara, who came to work in East London after completing secondary education in King Williamstown.

"There was a big difference between school-going and non-school going youth. Students put on their school uniform, also to protect themselves against the police, who were troublesome and arrested the **ngxungxus**."[75]

There was, however, another reason why students did not associate with non-school going youth, namely, the kind of discipline that was administered by teachers at the time.

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73   Interview with Mvulane 13/9/90.
74   Idem.
75   Interview with Gxara 2/1/92.

"Teachers were feared by everybody. They were different. You saw them even by their attire. They were confident and did not care for boys. They believed in beating pupils. Boys were beaten with sticks. No one would question that, not even parents. There are people who sacrificed their education and left school because of corporal punishment."[76]

Echoing similar sentiments about the kind of discipline in schools at the time, Mvulane had this to say:

"Students in the past were punished. One was forced in the past to study and we were beaten. To avoid being caned you had to do what the teacher wanted you to do. One wouldn't dare go and play, leaving your home work unattended to. You would be punished with a cane....... In the past, students hardly argued with teachers."[77]

This rather Spartan discipline was not new. It was in line with the austere and rigid upbringing of children in rural areas. The beating of boys by mature men, be it a biological father or not, was a part of rural life and seen as essential to bringing up children, especially males. Some of the teachers in East London, for example, S.S. Sofute (an uncle of the author) had a rural background and upbringing. However, for career oriented students, it was worth enduring the above mentioned discipline.

For the very few parents who could afford it, there were schools outside of East London, for example Lovedale and Healdtown in the Ciskei, and Blythswood and St John's College in the Transkei. Like those in rural areas, they were called 'senior students' (**amasinala**). According to Bhele, they were generally considered to be conceited and aloof.[78] There are no indications that they formed any particular group of their own. They were known, and distinguished themselves by staying away from youth activities of local students, for example.

Youth and politics

Throughout the 1940s, political organisation amongst Africans in East London was weak. Nationally, the African National Congress was arguably the strongest and most prominent

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76   Idem.
77   Interview with Mvulane 13/9/90.
78   Interview with Bhele 8/10/90.

organisation championing the cause of Africans. During the period from the 1930s to about mid-1940s, the African National Congress was itself weak. The formation of the Youth League of the African National Congress in 1944 breathed new life into an otherwise moribund organisation. Youth League activities during its initial stages centred in the Transvaal and a few centres like Fort Hare. It was only in 1949 that a branch of the Youth League was established in East London.[79] Prior to the establishment of the Youth League in East London, African politics in the late 1940s was dominated by tensions amongst supporters of the African National Congress.[80] The Youth League in East London was led by young men who did not involve themselves in the disputes of, and were at times at loggerheads with, the older leadership of the African National Congress. The Youth League was much more active than its mother body. For example, they organised a stay away protesting the promulgation of the Suppression of Communism Act in 1950.[81]

With the birth of the Youth League, a new definition of the youth emerged. Hitherto, youth (**ulutsha**), as stated, referred, roughly, to boys and girls in their late teens and early to mid twenties. Marriage, for both males and females, was the breaking point. But the establishment of the Youth League redefined youth to mean people from their twenties right up to above forty years. Some of the Youth League members, like Gwentshe, the President of the Cape branch , were married and had children. One possible explanation for this phenomenon could be that politics as such was associated with old, mature men. It was certainly not meant for boys (**amakhwenkwe**) and young men (**amakrwala** and **abafana**). Given the hierarchical structure of African society, based on age, young people who wanted to participate in politics like the founders of the Youth League, could not join the ANC and exercise an influence. They would be bullied on the basis of their age, and by a process of deduction, immaturity. Hence the need for a 'youth' organisation.[82] However, it must be borne in mind that boys (**amakhwenkwe**) in particular and perhaps young men fresh from initiation (**amakrwala**) were excluded from this new political definition of youth.

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79   See Lodge T (1987). Political Mobilisation during the 1950s: An East London Case Study. In Marks S and Trapido S (eds) The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa (London:Longman); Mager A & Minkley G (1990). Reaping the Whirlwind: The East London Riots of 1952. In History Workshop, Wits, Johannesburg, 6-10 February. Reader suggests that the Youth League was established in East London by 1948. See Reader op. cit. p 25.
80   See Lodge (1987) op. cit.; and Reader op. cit. p 25.
81   See Lodge (1987) op. cit.; and Mager & Minkley op. cit.
82   Mgcina held similar views - see Interview 23/3/92.

The ANC Youth League was established in 1944 by young African professionals and intellectuals in the Vaal area. However, whilst remaining essentially an organisation of young professionals and intellectuals, when it was launched in East London, it was led by young men "who had not completed JC".[83] Its president, Gwentshe, was a labourer.[84] However, there is evidence of influence by young intellectuals with radical Africanist inclinations from Fort Hare University.[85] They used to visit East London during weekends to propagate their Africanist ideas. Youth League activities, like the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU), took the form of Sunday meetings at Bantu square. This meant that migrant workers who spent their weekends in the countryside were not part of these activities. Mager and Minkley suggest that the Youth League probably made an impact on some of those Africans who were permanently resident in East London.

It is against the above background of tensions within the Congress movement and a militant Youth League that East London participated in the ANC led Defiance Campaign of 1952. Although East London, due to squabbles within the ANC, entered the campaign late, it was second only to Port Elizabeth in the country.[86] Who participated in the Campaign? Support, in terms of Mager & Minkley, came mainly from young men and women, as well as older single women of the shackyard. They argue that the latter's concerns of lodgers' levies, police raids, homelessness, unemployment and poverty informed their everyday lives and decided their political participation.[87] According to the former Mayor of East London, Mr Donald Card, who was a policeman in East London at the time of the Defiance Campaign, the youngest people they arrested during the Campaign would have been in their mid twenties:

> "There were elderly people involved. There were youngsters in the vicinity of about 25 years of age. But there no kids. Only **oomama**, the old ladies and old men, there were lots of them arrested."[88]

Who did not participate?

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83   Mager & Minkley op. cit. p 1.
84   Interview with Bhele 8/10/90.
85   See Lodge (1987) op. cit. and Mager & Minkley op. cit. Examples of such intellectuals are A.P. Mda, Robert Sobukwe and T.T. Letlaka, all of whom became members of the Pan Africanist Congress when it was established in 1959.
86   See Lodge T (1983). Black Politics in South Africa since 1945 (Johannesburg:Ravan Press), p 46.
87   Mager & Minkley op. cit.
88   Interview with Donald Card 2/1/91.

From the above it seems clear that boys (**amakhwenkwe**) were conspicuous by their absence. In the other words, the age group of 'tsotsis' and **iingxungxu** was excluded from the Campaign. The other category that was conspicuous by its absence was the students. Card was adamant that students were not involved. Responding to the question about the involvement of students, he was curt:

> "No, they were not involved. Students were not involved in the Defiance Campaign, there were no students in the defiance campaign."[89]

The above is not surprising given the fact that the definition of 'youth' in the dictionary of both the ANC and the ANC Youth League excluded boys and girls, including school children.

Towards the end of 1952, at the height of the Defiance Campaign, there was 'rioting' in Kimberly and Port Elizabeth. This development led to a ban on meetings and the restriction of 52 leaders from the Eastern Cape in terms of the Riotous Assemblies and Suppression of Communism Acts. Despite the ban, the East London Youth League organised a meeting on a Sunday afternoon, 9 November 1952. The chief magistrate allowed the meeting to take place on the understanding that it was a prayer meeting. The meeting was attended by about 1 500 people from East London locations. The police on their part concluded that the meeting was a political meeting and came to the meeting heavily armed. The crowd was ordered to disperse. Within minutes of the order the police opened fire with guns, killing and injuring dozens of people, some of whom were in nearby shacks and not part of the crowd.[90] It is not clear how the shooting started; various claims are made. Some allege that some people in the crowd started attacking the police with stones, whilst others claim that the shooting was unprovoked. What seems clear, though is that no police was killed or injured; the victims were all location people. Reader puts the issue in mild terms when he alleges that there was "little doubt that some innocent persons at a distance from the shooting were accidentally killed or wounded in their homes."[91] In the chaos that ensued, two whites, a well known and popular insurance agent and an equally known and popular Roman Catholic nun, who was also a medical doctor, Dr Elsie

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89   Idem. All the interviewees said the same regarding the role of students in the campaign.
90   Mager & Minkley op. cit. p 1.
91   Reader op. cit. p 26.

Quinlan, were killed in two sections of the East Bank locations. Dr Quinlan was pelted with stones, stabbed and eventually set alight. Evidence, though dubious, was given in court that her flesh was eaten by some of the attackers.

By the evening, according to newspaper reports, there were nine people dead, including the two whites, and twenty seven reported injured. However, according to Card, about 200 people were shot by the police. In his words:

> "Newspapers carried out that only nine people were shot, but from the removal of bodies we established that there were round about 200 people shot."[92]

That night buildings associated with whites and the government in the East Bank location were destroyed. These included the Roman Catholic Church, the Catholic mission, a new Teacher Training College, Peacock Hall, the house of the commonage ranger and the model dairy depot. Doors of the Gompo Institute for Natives for 'deviate' youth were smashed down and fifty four youths freed. The violence spread to the West Bank location where buses were stoned, also including the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches.

Who led the 'riots'?

A distinction needs to be made between the organisers of the meeting of the 9 November 1952 and the violence that later ensued. The meeting itself was organised by the ANC Youth League. However, the events following the police shootings were spontaneous and beyond the control of the organisers of the meeting. Referring to the actions of the organisers during the 'riots', Donald Card averred:

> "Most of the executive (of the ANC) ran to the police station to get assistance. You see, there was stone throwing, and then shootings, and then in came the nun. When the nun came in, and they stopped the car, these guys from the ANC ran to the police station for help."[93]

On the whole, the general opinion seems to be that those who participated in the violence were the unemployed youth, particularly the 'tsotsis' and **ngxungxus**. This view was held by the interviewees. Also sharing this view was Donald Card. According to him:

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92   Interview with Donald Card 2/1/91.
93   Idem.

"All the chaps we charged were under the age of 25 years. They were all youth. A lot of them unemployed. What we did when the people were charged, we asked them whether they were employed or not, most of them were unemployed."[94]

Further, in terms of those who were arrested, following Ngakane, 52,7% were "juveniles whose ages ranged between 14 years and 21 years", and of these "only 8 were attending school at the time of the riot."[95] The bulk of those charged were males, only two women were charged.

Police reaction to the 'rioting' was sharp and swift. Their solution to the problem was to arrest the suspects. At the same time, they intensified pass raids, forcing hundreds of Africans to flee to the countryside. By June, 1953, the police could claim to have successfully dealt with the 'tsotsi' population. According to them, "'the tsotsi population", allegedly 6 000 at the time of the riots had been "whittled down to 600 through deportation and pass raids."'[96]

A point to grasp here is that boys (**amakhwenkwe**) were not involved in politics at all. They showed no interest, and no attempts were made to involve them in politics by those in political organisations. If anything, they were discouraged. This was especially the case with students during the Defiance Campaign. According to Gxara:

"The youth were not involved in politics. They were not interested in politics. They played sport. We came across politics in sport in 1963. What was popular in East London was entertainment (dance), rugby and tap dancing and choir competitions in halls. No one really cared about politics."[97]

It is argued that remnants of the past, in the sense that men and boys cannot be involved in the same organisation, could have played a role. Further, the political tradition of resistance politics was based on pleadings, deputations and so on. There was a strong emphasis on talking (**ukucikoza**), debate (**ukuxoxa**), persuading and so on. Although strategies changed with the 1949 Programme of Action, which favoured strikes and

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94   Idem.
95   Ngakane op. cit. p 2.
96   Quoted from Mager & Minkley op. cit. p 2.
97   Interview with Gxara 2/1/92.

boycotts, still, ability to debate and be articulate remained essential. In the past, debate was for men. Boys could only fight. However, during the 'riots', a different style of resistance emerged. This time, adventure, courage and bravery replaced debating skills. In such circumstances, 'boys', in particular the 'tsotsis', were more appropriately involved. As we have seen above, of those arrested for the riots and for the killing of the insurance agent and the nun, the majority were between the ages of 14 and 21 years, most definitely boys (**amakhwenkwe**). As already stated, in terms of public they were "tsotsis".[98] They could hardly have been members of the Youth League. Gxara's view of the November 1952 events go something like this:

> "It was difficult to make head or tail of the episode. It was not planned. Most of us felt bad about the killing. The nun was a doctor and loved by the people. She was killed by people who were not political but who join politics for their own evil intentions."[99]

Reader's explanation of why rioting and destruction fitted 'tsotsis' is illuminating:

> "The **tsotsis**, unlike the majority of adults present at the time, were able to strike in an ecstasy of abandon, with no property, no future, no employment, nothing to lose save their seemingly worthless lives."[100]

Although the Youth League distanced itself from the 'rioters', those arrested were subsequently represented by Joe Slovo and got support from the local African people.[101]

What became of the youth as they grew older?

So far, our definition of youth (**ulutsha**), suggests boys, in particular, and young men on the one hand, and girls up to marriage, on the other. The youth as such has been disaggregated into various categories. The question that arises is: What became of the youth as they grew old?

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98 See Mager & Minkley op. cit. p 3.
99 Interview with Gxara 2/1/92.
100 Reader op. cit. p 28.
101 See Mager and Minkley op. cit., for a discussion of this point. See also Reader op. cit. p 28-9.

It has been stated above that circumcision played an important role in marking a transition from a mischievous boyish life to the responsible life of men. In the case of rural areas, the ritual achieved its objectives. What was the position in the urban areas?

Despite the new categories that were emerging with urbanisation, a striking similarity between rural and urban youth was that as 'boys' they were mischievous, and this was generally accepted given the expectation that after circumcision the mischief would come to an end. For example, boys in both rural and urban areas were involved in faction fights, fighting for control of territories, establishing who the boss was, and so on. The influence of rural areas on the significance of circumcision was carried to urban areas. Almost all the interviewees agreed that there was a palpable difference between boys and young men. The countryside was regarded as the most ideal place for the ceremony.[102]

> "When I came here, boys used to go to the countryside for circumcision. Upon circumcision, the young men would mend their ways, there would be a great difference in behaviour."[103]

However, the ritual in urban areas was not always as effective as in rural areas. In what follows, we shall look at the various categories discussed above, see what difference circumcision made to the behaviour of male youth, and what happened to youth as they grew older.

The Tsotsis

'Tsotsis', it seems, started distinguishing themselves as such at about 12 years. However, it is in their late teens and/or early twenties that they seemed to reach their peak as boys, at which time they undergo circumcision. Mvulane summarises the various stages thus:

> "In terms of age, they started at about 12 years. They wore a certain type of trousers with narrow bottoms and caps pulled just above the eyes. At about the age of 20

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102 Something that remains a burning issue to this day amongst Xhosas is where one undergoes circumcision. Amongst 'school' people in particular, the tendency is to send boys to hospital for circumcision, something that is detested by some Xhosas. The latter sometimes refuse to accept the former as a 'man'. To earn the latter status, one needs to undergo the operation either in the countryside or the bush, away from women.

103 Interview with Gxara 2/1/92.

years, they liked to go to the community centre where there used to be get-togethers on Saturdays. Everybody used to attend. They also liked to go to the cinemas. It is here that they learnt these tricks of attacking people and the like. They usually underwent circumcision at the age of 16 to 18 years.[104] What you would find is that some of them had relatives in rural areas. Those would go to rural areas for the operation. Those without rural links underwent circumcision on the outskirts of the township, in the bushes. Some had parents.....[105]

What became of them after circumcision? After circumcision, 'tsotsis' took different routes. Some reformed, whilst others continued with their activities. The latter either ended in prison, got crippled or killed.

Mvulane's judgement of 'tsotsis' was harsh: Once a tsotsi, always a tsotsi:

"**Tsotsis** never reformed. If one was a **tsotsi**, one remained one even after circumcision. In fact, one became worse. The male adult relatives used to admonish them. In some cases one found that other **tsotsis** admonished their counterparts. So much so that despite being circumcised, they moved around with boys. In such a situation there would be no discipline. Boys would call them 'Bra so and so,' and they would move around together doing the same things they did before circumcision."[106]

The above problem of young men continuing to mix with boys who were their friends was averted in rural areas by group circumcision, that is, all boys of the same age and generation would undergo circumcision at the same time.[107] This was made possible by the community oriented nature of rural society. In the urban areas, there was a struggle for survival and very little cooperation.

Mvulane did concede that some reformed, though at a late age, in their 30s. By reform, it seems, was meant absorption into the job market, and a stable married life.

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104 The majority of the interviewees suggested that the circumcision age was more towards the late teens and early twenties - See in particular, Interview with VV 18/12/92.
105 Interview with Mvulane 13/9/90.
106 Idem.
107 See Interview with VV 18/12/92.

"A person used to reform at the age of about 30 years. At that age you would find 'tsotsis' seriously looking for work and stable wives. By the time they reached 40 years or so, one would notice that their earlier habits had changed."[108]

However, some never reformed at all, not even at a late age.

"There were those who never reformed. I remember a chap, only known to me as Tshosi, who was a jail-bird and murderer. He ended up murdered. He was stabbed to death. There was another one called Two-Boy. He died here in Mdantsane, he was already old and well known."[109]

Rural Youth (Imixhaka)

On the whole, migrant youth, particularly the 'Red' youth worked in the urban areas, but were committed to 'building the household' back home in the rural areas. This, as we have seen, was emphasised at the admonition, coming out ceremory, the highlight of the circumcision ritual.[110] However, some got influenced by urban life, particularly those who did not have a stake in rural areas. Gxara dubbed such people "unreliable" (amarhumsha). This category, according to him, divided into two.

"There were those who were labelled unreliable because they were no longer going home, the 'turncoats' (amatshipha). Those were usually pathetic, not working, struggling and so on. Others were prosperous, selling dagga and embarking on other means of getting money. They were proud of themselves. Although they were not working, they built houses in the countryside."[111]

People, through the abakhaya associations, were helpful in assisting those wanting work. They would let others know if there was work available that they happened to know of.[112] However, even during this period, the category of imixhaka was beginning to be absorbed into the other urban categories, particularly the 'tsotsis'.

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108 Interview with Mvulane 13/9/90.
109 Idem.
110 Mayer (1980) op. cit.
111 Interview with Gxara 2/1/92.
112 Idem.

Students

With regard to students who passed at least standard six, they ended up working. In terms of their activities in the townships, they participated in sport, entertainment over week-ends in the form of musical activities at the social centres.

Conclusion

We see then that during this period, the youth in urban areas was numerically small and fragmented. This does not suggest that the divisions were rigid. Each category, for example, the 'tsotsis' had its own nuances, for example, criminals, bright boys. Further, we saw that members from one category moved to the other categories. This was particularly the case with **imixhaka** from rural areas, who, when they arrived in the urban areas discovered that none of the categories existing in rural areas existed in the cities. Even during this period, they found that they were drawn to some of the youth categories in urban areas, for example 'tsotsis'. However, membership in categories was fundamental to identifying how youth was socialised and its prospects. While some 'tsotsis' became hardened criminals, others, as well as other categories of youths, either got absorbed into a labour market that was still catering for most male adults or found the possibility of resettling in maturity in a rural homestead.

Finally, it is during this period that a new category of the youth emerged, namely the political youth. The composition of this new category excluded the youth as it had hitherto evolved, particular boys and girls. Yet, developments during the November 'riots' demonstrated that the latter, acting on their own, could pose difficulties in the political struggle.

CHAPTER 3.

EAST LONDON LOCATIONS YOUTH IN THE
1950s AND EARLY 1960s.

Background.

The events of 1952, particularly the killing of the two whites and the subsequent 'riots', shook the East London white community and put, arguably for the first time, the youth in locations high on the agenda of the state and the municipality. It took the killing of whites and the destruction of government property for the state and the municipality to take serious note of violence and conditions in the locations. The destruction was (rightly) associated with juvenile delinquency. The solutions proposed by the municipality were similar to many currently considered but little came of them. In line with apartheid thinking, the state's response was repressive. Their first answer was to get rid of unemployed youth by chasing them to the countryside. However, there were problems with this approach, particularly for youth whose parents were 'legal' residents of East London. Their permission had to be sought. Further, the assumption was that there was a countryside that the youth could go to and would stay. Expulsions were in fact the one proposal that was to an extent implemented.

The mayor of East London at the time, Cr Fox, adopted a different route to the repressive measures adopted by the state. He convened a conference in May 1953 consequent to a suggestion by "a group of citizens interested in civic matters" in order "to consider the problem of juvenile delinquency in the city's locations, i.e., to consider the so-called Tsotsi problem."[1] In his opening remarks, Fox averred: "After a fire, when thanks have been extended to the fire brigade and the immediate anxiety has passed, one looks to one's insurances and one carefully investigates the hazards for the future."[2] According to the report, the "European population was deeply shocked by the evidence of the part played by very youthful elements in the actual events, and the savage lawlessness which they displayed."[3] The stated purpose of the conference was thus "to investigate the fundamental causes of the disorder in order to take whatever local action might be possible to prevent a recurrence of events which might have grave consequences for the community as a whole." A Joint Committee, made up of Africans and Whites, was later established.

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1   African Juvenile Unemployment in Duncan Village (1955). East London, p 2.
2   Idem.
3   Idem.

During deliberations of the Joint Committee, Cr McJannet, identified "the difficult and dangerous element in the African population known as the Tsotsi" as the culprits. The latter were defined as "gangs of Native juveniles, the members of which are predominantly unemployed and are characterised by the fact that they wear the same distinctive clothing, make use of the same secret language, have a strong group consciousness and live strongly by illegal means." This category of juvenile arose out of "undesirable social and economic conditions in the environment in which they grow from childhood to maturity, very largely associated with the break-down of the old tribal customs of the African community and the suddenness of the change to industrial conditions."[4] The solution to the problem of juvenile delinquency was proposed as "the need to find employment for them." Further, provision for better housing and playing fields were emphasised.[5]

There were mixed reactions to the proposed solution. Whites at the conference argued that "urban African juveniles under present conditions were 'unemployable'" and they "went on to welcome the Government's announced intention of establishing training camps for these youths. .... where they will be disciplined, receive elementary occupational training, and as far as possible be prepared for their future tasks in the sphere of labour." However, African participants were not happy with this proposition, expressing fear that these training camps "might develop into miniature jails for juveniles who had not committed any crime, but are unemployable for reasons beyond their control." No resolution was adopted in this regard.

The issue of employment was explored, though. The Joint Committee, following the Inter-departmental Committee in Transvaal in 1951, recommended that the Council should conduct a survey of "unemployment locally" and "should make itself responsible for the institution in East London of an African Juvenile Affairs Board or any other body considered more suitable for the purpose, to find avenues of employment for young Africans, apply aptitude tests and classify juvenile Africans for employment."[6] Organised industry and commerce in East London was to be approached by the Council. The carrot for industry and commerce was the "relaxations recently introduced by the Government whereby wage determination rates and Industrial Council agreements are modified to permit the employment of African youths at specially reduced rates."[7]

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4   Ibid., p 3.
5   Idem.
6   Ibid., p 5.
7   Idem.

In a letter addressed to the Chairman of the Mayor's Committee, from the Acting Secretary for Native Affairs dated 28 January 1954, the following was said with regard to 'Native Urban Youth Problem':

> "In view of the fact that tsotsism is directly and primarily caused by unemployment, every endeavor must be made to place juveniles in employment. In this connection it should be pointed out that this Department has established a network of Native labour bureaux throughout the Union and has assigned the functions of conducting urban labour bureaux to local authorities. All labour bureaux have accordingly been asked to ensure that juveniles are placed in employment as far as possible."[8]

Apart from the problem of unemployment, the following were also given as causes of juvenile delinquency: The absence of compulsory education; the lack of parental control due to the economic necessity of the parents being absent at work; the almost complete lack of recreational facilities; and the slum-like conditions of most of the location areas.[9] As regards education: It was recommended that Standard IV or 15 years should "be adopted as the minimum standards of compulsory education for African children .... The difficulties that will arise from the prosecution of this policy will, in our opinion, help to avoid consequences of a much more serious character." Also suggested were, a junior secondary school in one of the locations and the re-establihment of a teacher-training scheme. The Council was to be requested "to adopt practical ways and means of encouraging the establishment of industrial and technical vocational training facilities for African youth who desire and require training in East London." Nursery schools and creches were also recommended.

As far as recreational facilities were concerned, it was proposed that the church and missionary schools should play a prominent role in establishing youth club activities, units of the Boys Brigade, Girl Guides and Boy Scouts. "Bad cinema films" were condemned as having "demoralising effects ..... particularly on young Africans." Lack of adequate and decent sanitary conveniences and the consequently foul state of the streets and gutters were identified as having "a serious effect on African morale."

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8   Ibid., p 15.
9   Ibid., p 6.

The report of the Mayor's Committee concluded on a positive note that the "future of the Africans in East London is so completely tied up with its locations that we welcome every civilising influence that can be introduced to improve the conditions under which the residents must continue to live."[10]

At the same time as the above deliberations were taking place at local level, the central state and capital were also grappling with the problem. In a bid to address the problem of unemployment, including youth unemployment, in urban areas, the National Party adopted the Unemployment Labour Preference Policy (ULPP). In terms of the provisions of the ULPP, the labour of urban youth needed to be utilised before considering employing migrant labour. In this regard, the ULPP was meant to serve both as a measure to curb African urbanisation and at the same time act as a social and political control over the youth problem. According to Posel, the assumption was that township youth aged between 15 and 20 years could move into domestic service and the lighter unskilled jobs.[11]

However, East London industrialists were not interested in urban youth labour. According to Minkley for "many firms, migrancy was the 'most suitable form of native labour' throughout the 1950s, and as such defended 'tooth and nail' in chamber meetings and at work.[12] Their view was that the urban youth were ill-disciplined, defiant and so on.[13] On the other hand, in a bid to attract employers, the Native Affairs Department negotiated with the Department of Labour to allow employers to pay lower wages to African youths doing the same jobs as adults in Pretoria, the Witwatersrand, Port Elizabeth, Durban, East London, Bloemfontein, Witbank and Vereeniging.[14] But youth born and bred in urban areas disdained regular, low paying and menial employment, in favour of the more adventurous life of casual jobs at the market, pilfering, robbing and so on.[15] Moreover, labour discipline in very low wage jobs was not only a youth problem; it was "a major issue affecting the workplace and the relations of work in the 1950s.[16] However, the situation was different if there was a possibility of stealing at work to supplement wages, a practise called **isonka** (literally bread), which was not condemned, but understood, by Africans.

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10   Ibid., p 10.
11   Posel D (1991). <u>The Making of Apartheid 1948-1961</u> (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p 131.
12   Minkley (1992) op. cit. p 749.
13   See Ngakane op. cit. p 2.
14   Posel op. cit. p 87.
15   See Ngakane op. cit. p 2, on the attitude of urban youth to working in gardens in particular.
16   See Minkley (1992) op. cit. p 755.

In sum, despite the municipality's good intentions of dealing with the youth unemployment problem, in practice they could not obtain their objectives, which meant that the problem remained. Not only did the problem remain, it became bigger as the East London population grew and stabilised. By 1955, despite the expulsions following the 1952 'riots', it was estimated that there were about 78 000 Africans, as against the 39 727 recorded in 1951, in the East London municipal area.[17] According to Reader's survey, children below the age of 15 still represented the bulk (two thirds) of 'away' Africans. About 14% of the population was recorded as being permanent urban Africans without any homes in the countryside.

In the meantime, the rise of manufacturing, and thus the need for semi-skilled and skilled labour, led to the need for a stable labour force. Some scholars assert that capitalists "took strong exception to the migrant labour system, adjudged to be the root cause of the labour turnover and low labour productivity which beset the manufacturing sector".[18] In the case of East London, though, capitalists were well disposed towards migrant labour. All they wanted was a stable migrant labour force, which was possible in terms of the pass law regulations. For example, a migrant worker who continuously worked for one employer for a period of 10 years or worked for 15 years in a city qualified for permanent resident rights. Once again, instead of solving unemployment in urban areas, the above loop-hole meant that the urban unemployed youth remained unemployed, whilst more Africans were coming in. Given an emerging pattern of deteriorating conditions in the rural areas, workers endured near slave working conditions in order to qualify.

To stabilise the workforce, the state became harsh in its implementation of the pass laws, effectively dividing Africans into 'insiders' ('legal residents) and 'outsiders' (illegal residents). Interviewees painfully recount the ruthlessness of the police and the humiliation people were subjected to during those days:

> "There was a policeman, called Manci. He was a municipality policeman. Hundreds of people every day would be there in the streets. Arrests started at about 4 in the early hours of the morning to about 10 in the morning. Women with

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17 Reader op. cit. p 42. This figure is broken down thus: 66 400 net and 11 579 away. Further, the above figure includes Africans staying in the following areas: East Bank, West Bank and Cambridge locations, and employer resident.
18 Posel op. cit. p 12.

babies were some of those arrests. We could see them as we were going to school. Some were sick and had come to see doctors."[19]

But the level of desperation on the part of the 'outsiders' to avoid influx control regulations is best expressed by Donald Card, recalling his experiences as a policeman and, in this particular case, the question of influx control:

> "I was involved in picking up people. On one occasion, we found 52 people in boxes, being transported to Cape Town on the back of a truck. People were paying for illegal labour, which was cheap."[20]

Lastly, another development which compounded youth unemployment was that by the mid-1950's, the boom years in East London were over. In the words of Hobart Houghton, the situation became "progressively more difficult". The Government policy of credit restriction and higher interest rates to curb inflation and to redress an adverse balance of payments, affected the building and construction industry, resulting in unemployment.[21]

In the light of the above, the question that needs to be asked and answered is: What was the nature of the youth during the rest of the 1950s to the early 1960s, given the failure to implement the solutions debated in 1952. It will be argued below that the categories that were identified in the previous section remained largely as they were for most of the 1950's. The difference, perhaps, being that the influence of the 'tsotsis' was becoming more pervasive and influencing the youth as such. For example, East London-born students came to dress the same as the 'tsotsis', particularly the 'bright boys'. Significant changes took place in the late 1950's and early 1960's when, for perhaps the first time, youth, in some cases students and 'boys' below 20 years, were recruited into politics, in stark contrast to their non-involvement during the 1952 defiance campaign. What should be borne in mind, though, was that the youth was tail-ending, under the strict guidance of senior political leaders, who were men. Furthermore, the unity brought about by politics was short-lived and politics went underground or disappeared in the 1960s.

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19   Interview with Ntsundu 2/3/91.
20   Interview with Donald Card 2/1/91.
21   Houghton op. cit. p 126.

The Tsotsis.

After the 1952 'riots', the state claimed to have eradicated tsotsism in East London, by arresting some and chasing others to rural areas. However, this turned out to be misleading. Barely two years after the 'riots', there was, in 1954, a big faction fight in the East London locations.[22] By the mid 1950s, the pervasive use of the knife was evident. According to Ntsundu:

"After about 1955, knife stabbing became fashionable. This coincided with the rise of boxing. Boxing was worshipped. Of course rugby still enjoyed its place."[23]

Ntsundu contended that this was a fairly new development.[24] In his words:

"What I noticed was the frequency of the stabbings and the expertise displayed. Heroes emerged such that if a person was good in stabbing, even if one hadn't seen the inside of a class-room, they would be in love with girls doing matric at Welsh High School. During those days, studying at Welsh, wearing the maroon blazer, was highly regarded."[25]

It has been pointed out above that tsotsis were not a homogeneous grouping. There were criminals, what Ntsundu called the 'real **Ngxungxus**, and the 'bright boys'. As already stated, a feature of the former was their tendency to stab. Stabbing to them was what stick-fighting was to rural boys, it was a display of a skill, as in sport. They also had their own norms. However, a distinction is often draw between urban born tsotsis and those with a rural background. As regards the former:

"They shaped like boxers, displayed foot-work when they stab. They ducked. They scratched each other. What was important amongst them was to stab a person a number of shallow wounds. A report that would be awaited from hospital would be: 'he has stabbed him 14 holes, without killing him'. This was a sign that the one who stabbed was not a 'bumpkin' (**umxhaka**). The latter were notorious for stabbing to

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22   Interview with Ntsundu 2/3/91.
23   Idem.
24   This view was backed up by most of the interviewees. The view is that, though there have always been tsotsis, it is in the 1950's that they became dominant.
25   Interview with Ntsundu 2/3/91.

death in one wound.[26] It was said that they were used to slaughtering pigs in the countryside."[27]

The murderous tsotsis, according to interviewees, were often dirty in terms of their appearance.

With regard to the 'bright boys', as we have already stated, stereotypically landlady's sons, who got money from their mothers,[28] didn't care about school and work. They differed from the criminal element in that they did not like to stab,[29] rob and so on. They were called the 'bright boys' in the sense that they were urbanised, fashionable in terms of their dress, and popular with women, including students. They liked singing. In those cases where they ended up looking for employment, they were selective. They worked in town, for meagre earnings, to add to what their mothers gave them.

"They were always neat, throughout the week, so much so that they wanted the type of employment that would keep them as they were. They worked in town, in Oxford Street, in shops, doctors, lawyers, pharmacies,cleaning windows and acting as messengers. They were earning very little money. You'll never see them in production, they don't want to see it, those urbanised boys."[30]

On the whole, East London tsotsis, unlike those in Johannesburg, were not organised in gangs.[31] Groups emerged only during periods of faction fighting, and would disappear soon thereafter. According to Ntsundu:

"There were groups like the Spoilers in Tsolo after the battles of 1954. At Mekeni there were the Vikings. These groups incorporated members of the various youth categories. This was common in battle situations. The youth categories came

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26 It was/is widely accepted that tsotsis with a rural origin were the murderers, unlike urban born youth, for whom stabbing was more like sport, a display of a skill.
27 Interview with Ntsundu 2/3/91.
28 Ntsundu remarked thus: "You know mothers when it comes to spoiling their children." (Interview 2/3/91).
29 They did carry knives, though, largely for purposes of self-defence, rather than murdering or stabbing people.
30 Interview with Ntsundu 2/3/91. This was confirmed by all the interviewees.
31 For the position in the Reef in the 1950's, see, inter alia, Glaser (1988/9). Students, Tsotsis and the Congress Youth League: Youth Organisation on the Rand in the 1940s and the 1950s. In Perspectives in Education, Vol 10, No 2.

together only to fight sectional battles, not around robbery, for example. They protected their interests and women."[32]

Students

By and large, students continued to be a distinct category of the youth. Teachers were an inspiration to some of the students. Social status, rather than wealth seems to have been the determining factor. Ntsundu claims that they "hero-worshipped" their teachers.

"When I looked at a teacher, I couldn't see anyone better, happy or sound than a teacher. I don't know about others. Yet, I could see that teachers were not rich."[33]

Further, this awareness was greatly encouraged by teachers. Not only did teachers encourage and persuade students, the latter, as we have seen in the last chapter, were beaten the minute they deviated from the line. According to Ntsundu:

"From standard 5, one became conscious and teachers emphasised that we should not behave as if we are not educated. We socialised very little with non-schooling children. To be seen mixing with the latter by teachers was inviting trouble. Teachers would not even beat you, they would talk and tease you. Anything you did wrongly would be attributed to the fact that you mix with **iingxungxus**."[34]

Indeed, career-orientated, status conscious students saw themselves as better and looked down at the tsotsis/ **ngxungxus**. Anyone who did not have a standard six certificate was a **ngxungxu**, in their eyes.

"The definition of a **ngxungxu** was one who neither was working nor studying. But amongst us as students, any non-school going young man was called **ingxungxu**, even if he was working, especially if a person left school without passing standard six. We respected a person with standard six. Such a person was not a **ngxungxu**, even if he was no longer at school or not working. Those who did not have a certificate, and could not enter to buy liquor were all **ngxungxus** in our eyes."[35]

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32   Interview with Ntsundu 2/3/91.
33   Idem.
34   Idem.
35   Idem.

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The treatment was harsher on women who associated with the non-schooling male youth, namely the 'tsotsis' and/or **ngxungxus**. Not only would they be under pressure from teachers, they would be ostracised by their own male counterparts.

> "If you were a girl and were in love with this group, we would have nothing to do with such a girl. She would be osctracised. That was still the case in the late 1950s and early 1960s, things that do not exist today."[36]

Be that as it may, ngxungxus/tsotsis had an influence on students. Ntsundu recalls that they as students had a faction fight. Those involved were boys from the Tsolo and Mekeni sections. Tsolo residents, on the whole, regarded themselves as the "true sons and daughters of the soil"[37] and looked down upon those from Mekeni. According to Ntsundu, the former claimed that those from Mekeni "were ignorant, whatever the level of education."[38] The influence of 'tsotsis', according to Ntsundu, manifested itself during the student faction fight.

> "What was inspiring us was that there was a pitched battle in 1954 between boys of Tsolo and Mekeni. Heroes emerged for whom we as young people had admiration. There were daring boys who ducked a rain of stones (**imvula yamatye**) and knives."[39]

It is above all the 'bright boys' that had an everlasting influence on the youth as such. As we have seen, they were no criminals as such. They liked their dress and women. Their influence seems to have been such that Ntsundu claimed that towards the late 1950's, clothing "fashion tended to replace the influence of the knife and stabbing."[40] Because they dressed well, they caught the eye of women (**amacherry**), including students. This compelled students, too, to follow suit, under penalty of losing women. By the late 1950's, it was no longer possible to distinguish tsotsis by their dress. What was possible was to distinguish urban youth (**amajita**) from youth from rural areas, the bumpkins (**abaxhaka**). The dress had now changed from the narrow bottom to a wide bottom trousers called **vubs**.

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36   Idem.
37   Interview with VV 18/12/92.
38   Interview with Ntsundu 2/3/91.
39   Idem.
40   Idem.

"Mail ordering became fashionable. The shoes were sharp pointed, called **amashapi** (sharpies). Trousers were chalk-striped and big, called oxford or **vubs**. Then there would be a matching shirt and cap, cut at the sides."[41]

The 'bumpkins' (imixhaka) and the beating of 'boys' in 1958.

People from the countryside often worked in the gardens, and were called 'garden boys' by urban youth. Some were cooks. On week-ends, especially on Sunday afternoons, they visited relatives in the locations. By the 1950's, most of them had been to the cities for a number of times, and were thus not complete aliens, which is where the name **umxhaka** originates.

By the late 1950's, there was developing in East London, a stable, migrant oriented African working class, at a time when there was a growing unemployed urban youth. At the same time, conditions in the locations were not improving. Squalor and overcrowding were still evident phenomena. No schools were provided for the growing youth population. Neither were recreational facilities made available. In 1957, the state indicated that all the East London locations would be disestablished and removed to an area, the present Mdantsane, about 25 km away from East London. This meant that no improvements would be made on the East London locations. By that time there were 62 African owned trading enterprises in East London made up of 51 general dealers, 1 butchery, 2 fresh produce, 3 purveyors of milk, 2 heated water dealers, 2 eating house keepers and 1 dry cleaning service.[42]

In 1958, East London experienced a growing tendency of the tsotsis to rob migrant workers, young and old. Hitherto, tsotsis used to fight amongst themselves, be involved in burglaries in town and rob their peers. It was rare for them to rob older people. But in 1958, the problem had developed to a stage where migrant workers, in particular, took up arms and beat 'boys'. Brian seems to share this view of things:

> The main reason why boys were beaten in 1958 was that 'tsotsism' was dominant. 'Tsotsis' were boys who were not circumcised. Boys were then beaten."[43]

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41   Idem.
42   Houghton op. cit. p 249.
43   Interview with Brian 10/1/93.

Brian attributes 'tsotsism' to the rise of single parents called **amankazana**. Not all single parents were **nkazanas**. He describes the latter as either domestic workers (**abasebenza emakhitshini**), unemployed, or shebeen queens. He goes on:

> "They are not married, they only had boy friends that they kept on changing. Without any family planning, they ended up with many children without responsible fathers. The latter enjoyed making children that they never supported."[44]

According to Brian, the single parents tended to protect and corrupt their children. They were aggressive against anyone who tried to discipline their children, something that was a departure from a long established and accepted African practise that it was the responsibility of elderly people to discipline children even if they were not the biological parents. Referring to the role played by **amankazana** in the rise of 'tsotsism', Brian averred:

> "But things started to change. There was a rise of single parents. A new culture developed in terms of which these parents started challenging anyone who beat their children, claiming that no one had the right to beat their children. For the first time, it became possible for children to report to their parents when they had been beaten by elderly people and/or teachers. These single parents, called **amankazana** would then get out into the street, their dresses stuck into their bloomers, and shout in the street."[45]

Brian alleges that it is mainly the boys of these women that made up the bulk of the 'tsotsis', and it is this category that was initially targeted by men in 1958.

Another view is that in that year, there was an influx of boys, tsotsis, from Queenstown, at the time one of the "roughest townships in South Africa."[46]

> "When the Queenstown youth arrived in East London, they saw that people were meek here. This does not mean that there was no mischief in East London, its just that it was controlled. Most of them stayed in the Tsolo section. They did silly things. There was an increase of attacks and robbery on old people."[47]

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44   Idem.
45   Idem.
46   Interview with Frank 13/1/93.
47   Interview with Ntsundu 2/3/91.

Why could East London youth not have been involved in the attacks and robbery? According to Ntsundu:

"The ethos of East London was that if you were the father of a person we knew, you would not be robbed by the youth of that area, unless it was youth from another section. On the whole, we knew each other a lot. At times a person would be attacked at night, but as soon as the person is identified as someone known, the attackers would let go and run away shouting **jinta, jinta, jinta** ....(leave him, leave him, leave him,...)[48]

At any rate, men, mainly migrants, identified East London boys as the culprits, and took a decision to discipline (**ukuqeqesha**) them. To show that the war was against boys, boys who fled to the bush for circumcision were not attacked. This is how Brian puts the matter:

"Boys who fled to the bush and underwent circumcision were not beaten. There was this belief that the spear (used for circumcision) changed ones behaviour."[49]

Initially boys were raided and beaten, but later on even young men, who did not wear a jacket and carry a stick, were beaten. As the scene became uglier, the police and some ANC members intervened.[50] Ntsundu claims that women, always protective of their children, also intervened.[51] According to Brain, even a local magistrate intervened.[52]

Once again, the tsotsis proved to be a weak, though potentially dangerous, element. In 1952, their destructive involvement during the 'riots' was put down within a day. Six years thereafter, in 1958, they bounced back, but still could not offer a sustained resistance. Asked about this episode, Donald Card recalled:

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48 Idem.
49 Interview with Brian 10/1/93. Ntsundu's views are not different. His emphasis was that boys were being disciplined: "They (boys) were just beaten. They were not expected to be anywhere. They were silly and were being disciplined. It was a lesson. This is why they were not tampered with when they went to the initiation school, which was close by." (Interview 4/3/91).
50 Conversation with Mvulane, who was sentenced for ANC activities in the early 1960s, 1/1/93.
51 Interview with Ntsundu 4/3/91.
52 Interview with Brian 10/1/93.

"I advised them (migrant workers) to carry sticks and not allow these youngsters to attack them. These people beat up these youngsters. In fact there were no youngsters left in East London. They cleaned up the town, there was no crime for quite some time."[53]

Part of the explanation was that, in the context of East London, with its links with the countryside, they were a numerically and organisationally weak force. Further, they were in most of their activities, a marginalised category of the youth.

Youth and politics

Hitherto youth as defined in this study had never been involved in the political struggle apart from the take-over of the protest movement in bloody fashion by the tsotsis in the riots of 9 November 1952. No attempt was ever done to recruit and politicise them. Politics was identified with mature and educated people. This was the case throughout the history of resistance, from the days of Jabavu in the nineteenth century, down to the establishment of the ANC (then called the Native National Congress) in 1912. Ntsundu recalled ordinary people's notion of politics:

"Politics was associated with certain people. People would say things like: 'Who is so and so to think that he can liberate people. What is his level of education' and so on. People associated politics with teachers, lawyers, educated people. The youth was not interested."[54]

The Sharpeville massacre of 21 March 1960, and the subsequent decision by the state to ban the PAC, which broke away from the ANC in 1959, and the ANC marked a turning point in South Africa's history of resistance. The above took place against the background of sweeping changes in the rest of Africa, as nationalist organisation were assuming power from their colonialists. In Algeria, armed struggle had been declared against the French. The banning of political organisations in South Africa made some to consider the armed struggle. Given the possibility of the armed struggle, some members of the PAC in particular, and to a certain extent the ANC, started recruiting the youth, including boys and students. Nkala, for instance, was 14 years when he attended PAC 'lectures'.[55]

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53   Interview with Donald Card 2/1/91.
54   Interview with Ntsundu 4/3/91.
55   Interview with Nkala 6/1/93.

In East London, it seems, political activities often centred at the back of a shop that was owned by C. J. Fazzie.[56] He was active as a member of the ANC Youth League during the Defiance Campaign, became a member of the Advisory Board after the Defiance Campaign, whilst at the same time maintaining links with Fort Hare graduates like Tsepo Letlaka and Robert Resha in Johannesburg.[57] When the PAC was formed in 1959, he became a member.[58] Ntsundu's account of how he got involved is as follows:

"I used to read newspapers and Drum. I wanted an older person to tell me what politics was. I told Fezile (his friend). He told me that he knew of a person, 'Bhut Fazzie', who had recently been released from prison, following the declaration of the state of emergency in 1960. He had a shop in Ziphunzana. I told him we should go there immediately."[59]

That introduction seems to have started a process in terms of which youth of Ntsundu's age were recruited to the PAC. Fazzie was the authority figure, responsible for giving the 'lectures'. However, with time, some 'graduated' and started giving 'lectures' themselves. Not only were students recruited, youth from other categories, for example, the 'bright boys' were recruited.

"By the end of the year there were a number of people visiting Fazzie's shop for lectures. Some of us had graduated to a position where we gave the lectures with Fazzie adding here and there. This is how the youth of under 30 years, in terms of my history, got involved in politics. Each one of us had a responsibility to organise. Some of us, like a friend of mine, organised the 'bright boys', as he himself liked to dress smart and liked women (**amacherry**). I specialised in students at Welsh (High School)."[60]

Lectures involved a presentation of the history of the struggle from 1912. Most of it, though was to whip up nationalist sentiments like "the land is ours, it does not belong to

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56   I am indebted to Paul Threwela, co-editor of the London based journal Searchlight for alerting me about this development.

57   See Lodge (1987) op. cit. Also Interview with Ntsundu 4/3/91.

58   Attempts to interview ANC youths of the time like Steve Tshwete, have been unsuccessful so far. The main interviewee on this period, Ntsundu, was a PAC member.

59   Interview with Ntsundu 4/3/91. Ntsundu was about 16 years at the time. He was later arrested and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for sabotage.

60   Idem.

whites." According to Ntsundu: "This is how we recruited people. We would present our case such that whoever refrained would feel like a woman (**uyakubangathi ngumfazi**)" (meaning a coward).[61]

By 1962, according to Ntsundu, there was talk of undergoing military training.

"We sensed that the **ngxungxus** were the ideal type, and would be interested in such an activity, that is military training. That is why we even recruited the Vikings."[62]

According to Ntsundu, **ngxungxus** and 'tsotsis' were recruited round about 1962. Yet, Gerhart has these caustic remarks to make about PAC members:

"If any single group could be identified as distinctively PAC in orientation, it would be the broad category known in some contexts as "location boys" and in others as **tsotsis**. .... Usually more educated than lower class workers, yet unable to break into the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, they are scornful of the low status and low paid employment available to them, and engage in rackets, con games and thefts of every description. Those who are unemployed may group into gangs of juvenile delinquents (referred to as **tsotsis**) and participate in crimes of violence. ...."[63]

Whilst it seems true that at one stage or another 'tsotsis' were recruited to the PAC, and, whilst it may be the case that elsewhere the typical member of the PAC was the 'tsotsis', there does not seem to be convincing evidence to back up Gerhart's allegation that 'tsotsis' were dominant in the context of East London. Donald Card, who was quick to identify the role of 'tsotsis' in 1952, during the riots, did not even mention the participation of 'tsotsis' in the early 1960s. He identified students as the main actors among the youth.

"After the riots (1952) things were dead, there was no movement, nothing happened for a long time. It became a quiet period. Then the PAC chaps started organising. Then the ANC as a counter to the PAC pro-violence scene. In Duncan Village there were students who were involved, but there were few among the ANC, there were quite a couple among the PAC. Don't forget that on the 8 April 1962 the PAC

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61   Idem.
62   Idem.
63   Gerhart G (1979). Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology. (Berkeley:University of California Press), p 223-4.

were going to attack East London and kill as many whites as they could. Among them there were a lot of youth as well, for example Malcolm Dyani and Zolile Keke, who is now in London. They were all students."[64]

From Card's account, and also from interviews, 'tsotsis' were not central in either PAC or ANC activities. Further, the involvement of the youth in politics took place almost immediately after the beating of 'boys' in 1958, an exercise which, despite excesses, did a lot to control 'tsotsism'. At the same time, politics did a lot to bring everybody, including the various categories of the youth, together. Recalling the impact of politics during this period on divisions that were a hallmark of East London locations up to the late 1950s, VV averred:

"In political circles people were opening up, you see, the ideas were being reshaped, there was a sense of clearly identifying the enemy.... I must say that the attitude of people was completely changing. East London was becoming a city for all, no longer the question of **amaGcaleka** and so on. This became possible with the theory of Pan Africanism and the notion of **amaAfrika**. This tended to bring us all together, and there was a strong realisation of the fact that we were all Africans. By that time the youth in particular had been completely politicised."[65]

New forms of divisions, however, emerged, namely political divisions between the ANC and the PAC and their respective supporters.[66]

By the end of 1964, the state had successfully suppressed resistance. Political activists ended up either on Robben Island or were forced to flee the country.

Conclusion

In sum, for the first time in the history of the youth during the period under investigation, various categories came together under one umbrella, politics. It should be noted, though, that the political youth during this period was merely tail-ending, receiving and following instructions from their seniors. In 1963, the state started clamping down on its underground opposition. By 1964 resistance had been effectively defeated. Most political

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64   Interview with Donald Card 2/1/91.
65   Interview with VV 18/12/92.
66   Idem.

leaders and members of the PAC and ANC were either arrested and sentenced to prison, or were forced to flee the country. The few who escaped were rendered moribund. With the clampdown, the youth was left without any political leadership. On their own, and against a belligerent state, they could not sustain their newly acquired and fragile unity. The vacuum left opened by the crackdown was filled in by the existing youth categories.

CHAPTER 4

THE DOLDRUMS AND THE RISE OF AN URBAN YOUTH CULTURE
IN EAST LONDON: 1964-1976.

By 1964, resistance forces had effectively been defeated. However, the political lull proved to be of short duration. It is, above all, with the Soweto students' uprisings of 16 June 1976 that a new dimension was brought to South Africa's social and political life. Not only did the uprisings mark the re-emergence of active political opposition to apartheid, they introduced new actors and leaders, the youth, to the economic, social and political scene. The youth, including students, occupied centre stage in the economic, social and political life of South Africa.

However, the process was uneven. The June 1976 events took place essentially in the Johannesburg and Pretoria townships, without any apparent organisational linkage with other places in the rest of South Africa, certainly not with the East London locations, where there was hardly any visible students' organisation.[1] It will be argued that at the time of the Soweto uprisings, the level of youth, including students' political and organisational development was still at its infancy in East London. In many ways, they were taken by surprise by the events. The molecular processes that were taking place were, however, given a boost by the uprisings. These eventually came to fruition towards the end of the 1970s, with the establishment of the South African Allied and Workers' Union (SAAWU), formally launched in 1980 in East London and the Border region as such.

This chapter will focus on the nature and composition of the youth in the East London locations during the decade preceding the 1976 Soweto students' uprisings and their aftermath. After attempts to unite the youth under the wing of political organisations, the youth back-slided after the suppression of political opposition. Old categories were revived. An urban youth culture, dominated by the 'tsotsis' and the 'bright boys' dominated the youth scene. Further, it will be argued that the establishment of Mdantsane, and the state's decision to disestablish East London locations, led to the neglect of the latter. For example, by 1976, the only high school in the East London locations, Welsh High School, had been closed. This becomes important when viewed against the background of the

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1   Conversation with some East London students of the time, December 1992.

growth of secondary schools in the rest of the country.[2] The above, in many ways, are some of the factors which explain why the East London youth lagged behind their Soweto counterparts.

The Establishment of Mdantsane

With the coming to power of the National Party, a new policy was formulated. The National Party decided to solve the problem of housing the African labour force by establishing townships away from the cities. In the case of East London, a decision was taken in 1957 to disestablish the East London locations and establish a township about 25 kilometres outside of East London.[3] This township, which was to be administered by the East London Municipality, was called Mdantsane. The first removals to Mdantsane, were in 1963. The first group of people to be removed from the East London locations were from the West Bank locations.

Initially, Mdantsane was, like the East London locations, to be administered by the East London Municipality. In 1966, though, the National Party government, in line with its 1959 policy of self-governing territories (homelands), proclaimed Mdantsane an urban 'city' of the Ciskei. This meant that Mdantsane would from 1966 fall under the Ciskei homeland. The implication of this move by the National Party was that a loophole was created in terms of regulations governing influx control. Africans coming to a Ciskei-run Mdantsane were from 1966 not subjected to the same influx control regulations as their counterparts in the East London locations. The reality of the situation, on the other hand, was that the majority of workers in Mdantsane worked in East London, and the latter drew its labour from the former. This made it easier for Africans seeking work in East London to stay in Mdantsane without any fear of being harassed. In a nutshell, what Africans could not get through the front door, that is staying in the East London locations whilst looking for work, they could get through the back door of Mdantsane. Moreover, Mdantsane was designed to accommodate families, staying with their children. As will be shown, East London did

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2 See Hyslop J (1988). School Student Movements and State Education Policy: 1972-87. In Cobbett W & Cohen R (eds) Popular Struggles in South Africa (London: James Currey); Bundy C (1987). Street Sociology and Pavement Politics: Aspects of Youth and Student Resistance in Cape Town, 1985. In Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol 13, No 3, April; and Diseko N (1992). The Origins and Development of the South African Students' Movement (SASM): 1968-1976. In Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol 18, No 1, March.

3 This, of course, was part of a wider strategy. More famous removals include those of District Six in Cape Town and Sophiatown in Johannesburg, for example.

not have the capacity to employ its economically active population. Under such circumstances, the loophole created by handing over Mdantsane to the Ciskei, meant that a very large fully-fledged industrial reserve army, depending for employment on a weak East London/ Border economy, was rapidly growing around it. Most of those who would be victims of unemployment, particularly in the 1980s, were the youth.

The process of moving people to Mdantsane proved to be much more complex than anticipated by its architects. Firstly, by 1977, the population in the East London locations, despite the removals to Mdantsane, had hardly decreased. Meanwhile, the Mdantsane population was increasing. By 1977 population estimates suggested that Mdantsane was the seventh largest urban centre in South Africa, with an estimated population of 115 628 people, compared to East London's population of about 119 727.[4] Secondly, the rate at which houses were built in Mdantsane was dropping, thus delaying the removal process. After more than ten years of the establishment of Mdantsane, the problem that led to its establishment was far from being sorted out. If anything, the total African urban population, living as stable families, in the remaining sections of the East London locations and Mdantsane, had grown by leaps and bound. This development, which really took root in the 1950's in East London, was to have important demographic implications. The number of children staying with their parents in urban areas was growing. This was shown, inter alia, by the number of schools that mushroomed in Mdantsane. By 1977, for example, the following number of schools, with the number of classrooms in brackets,[5] had been built:

Pre-school	1
Lower Primary	20 (200)
Higher Primary	12 (120)
Junior Secondary	3 (36)
Senior Secondary	2 (35)
Secondary combined	2

During the planning stage of Mdantsane, provision was made "for one lower primary school per 600 families, one higher primary school per 900 families and one post-primary school

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4   Gordon TJ (1980). Mdantsane: The Evolution of a Dependency. In Cook G and Opland J (eds) Mdantsane: Transitional City (Rhodes University:Institute of Social and Economic Research), pp 1 & 14.

5   Figures taken from Gordon op. cit. p 18.

per 1 800 families. Sites were allocated throughout the township so that no house is more than one kilometre from its nearest school".[6]

One of the consequences of the government's assumption that the East London locations would ultimately be disestablished was that no development took place in these locations. By the mid-1970's, people staying in some sections of these locations, for example, the West Bank location and sections of the East Bank locations, had been removed to Mdantsane. However, by the mid-1970's substantial parts of the East London locations still remained. Despite the fact that practise was undermining the government's assumptions, they seemingly decided to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear. For example, in 1972, the only high school in the area, Welsh High School, was closed, because the high school was by that time in a Coloured area. A new school, Ebenizer Majombozi, which was established in 1971, was a secondary school, not a high school. Students from the East London locations who wanted to do matric had to go through a costly exercise of attending schools outside of East London or travel to Mdantsane where there were already two high schools, Mzomhle and Wongalethu High Schools, both headed by former teachers of Welsh High School. Given the poverty stricken conditions of Duncan Village, it must be assumed that few parents could afford the expenses involved. On the whole, no improvements of note were done in the East London locations, with the result that the socio-economic conditions remained largely unaltered.

Lastly, the establishment of Mdantsane had grave implications for the economic development of East London. The period immediately after the suppression of political opposition to apartheid in the early 1960's witnessed an economic boom in South Africa which established South Africa as an integral part of the world economy. However, developments in East London were slightly different, with the result that East London's economy did not experience much of the economic boom. One of the reasons for this development can be traced back to the dilemma that confronted the National Party government regarding an effective control measure of Africans in urban areas. Given the fact that the bulk of Africans living in the homelands, and given the fact that the homelands were by the 1950's becoming rural slums, compelling Africans living in them to move to urban areas for a livelihood, the government commissioned F.R.Tomlinson to investigate and make recommendations on what could be done to limit the number of Africans in urban areas, whilst simultaneously ensuring that the homelands were viable places to live

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6   Idem.

in. The 1955 Tomlinson Commission recommended, inter alia, that border industries be established close to the homelands in order to offer employment for Africans in the homelands concerned. The decision to establish Mdantsane led to a government decision in 1960 to develop border industries in the area. According to Mcl. Daniel and Waxmonsky, "East London was one of the first border industrial areas to be declared and by 1962 the City Council was doing its best to encourage the establishment of industries in the municipal area."[7] Berlin Flats, some 40 km from East London, was chosen as a site.

The border industries that were set up provided employment opportunities essentially for Mdantsane residents. For example, when a textile factory was established in 1963, after the economic stagnation of the 1950's, an area close to Mdantsane was chosen. The Industrial Development Corporation specifically "requested that 300 dwellings be ready for occupation at Mdantsane adjacent to the factory site."[8] Mdantsane itself, although initially conceived as "a black city in the Ciskei", could not provide employment for its residents, and instead became more of a "dormitory township", with the majority of its residents dependent on East London and the border industries for employment.[9] The biggest employer (as at 1977) in Mdantsane was the civil service made up of 2 700 hospital staff, followed by 1 184 local government employees and about 626 teachers employed by the education department.[10] The professional and commercial sectors' employment capacity was below 250 employees.[11]

The creation of border industries had grave consequences for the development of industry in East London as such. Hardly any industrial development took place in East London during the boom years. Industries that could have been established in East London were lost to the border industries. Further, it is important to note that despite the fact that Berlin qualified for the border area concessions, with the basic municipality services like electricity, water and sewerage supplied, "only three industries had located there by 1973."[12] This was just before the oil crisis of towards the end of 1973, a development that

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7   Mcl. Daniel & Waxmonsky (1980). Migration Characteristics of Black Industrial Employees. In Cook G and Opland J (eds) Mdantsane: Transitional City (Rhodes University:Institute of Social and Economic Research), p 50. See also Hirsch & Kooy (1982). Industry and Employment in East London. In South African Labour Bulletin, Vol 7, Nos 4 & 5, February, p 52.
8   Gordon op. cit. p 10.
9   Ibid. p 8.
10 Ibid. pp 19-20.
11 Ibid. p 20.
12 Mcl. Daniel & Waxmonsky op. cit. p 50. See also Hirsch & Kooy op. cit. p 52.

plunged the world economy as such into a crisis that it has not recovered from to date. According to Hirsch & Kooy, "(M)anufacturing employment in East London, after averaging a growth rate of between 5 and 7 per cent a year between 1945 and 1972, dropped to under 4 per cent a year between 1972 and 1976."[13]

Another factor that worsened East London's chances of industrial development was a government decision taken in 1972 reversing "previous political decisions not to allow whites to establish industries in the homelands; they were now to be allowed to establish industries on an agency basis at a limited number of growth points."[14] Butterworth and Umtata in the Transkei, and Dimbaza in the Ciskei, were identified as growth points and industries were accordingly established in these two towns. Once again, industries that could have been established in East London were lost to the homelands, where, inter alia, concessions were greater than even the Border areas.[15]

Despite the above limiting factors, East London did experience some industrial growth during the period post the second world war. What was significant was the growing dominance of African semi-skilled labour in East London's manufacturing sector. For example, in 1976, African workers formed 78 percent of the labour force in the East London manufacturing sector.[16] East London's manufacturing sector was dominated by food and textiles, which between them employed, in 1976, about 61 percent of the African workers and about 56 percent of the total labour force.[17] A significant number of those employed were women, who had by the 1970s been fully incorporated into the labour process. Further, the dominance of manufacturing meant that more and more educated Africans were drawn into industry. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a standard six certificate was still highly regarded.[18] The textile industry employed a large number of less educated/skilled workers.[19] Not only was it women and educated Africans that were drawn into the labour market; less skilled labour was also more educated than before. Some of them had by 1976 been exposed to various political ideas, primarily Black Consciousness views and to a lesser extent, ANC and PAC views from those who had been released from Robben Island and banished to 'their' homelands and places like Mdantsane.[20]

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13   Hirsch & Kooy op. cit. p 53.
14   Mcl Daniel & Waxmonsky op. cit. p 50.
15   Hirsch & Kooy op. cit. p 53.
16   Ibid. p 55.
17   Idem.
18   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
19   Hirsch & Kooy op. cit. p 56.
20   Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.

In sum, by the mid-1970's, East London was faced with a large and growing fully fledged African working class that depended on it for employment. With the establishment of Mdantsane, more schools were built, which meant that more and more Africans were getting educated, and young and educated Africans were being employed in the manufacturing sector. At the same time, conditions in the East London locations, by then called Duncan Village, had not improved since the plan was to remove all Africans to Mdantsane. We have seen that instead of providing for more schools, the only high school, Welsh High School was closed in 1972, and a new secondary school, Ebenezer Majombozi, established in 1971. Yet, the truth of the matter was that the population in Duncan Village, despite the removals, had hardly decreased, due to natural growth and violations of influx control regulations. In the meantime, industrial development in East London was being hampered by a number of factors. The border industries that were set up were not successful, and East London was faced with a threatening situation of an economy that could not absorb its residents, particularly the youth.

With the above background, let us focus on the youth in Duncan Village.

Students.

On the whole, students, after the brief political period of the early 1960's, were as before, a fairly distinguishable youth category. They were always kept busy by one form of activity or the other. Apart from attending classes during the week, they were involved in numerous activities, for example sport, gardening, and so on, after school and on week-ends. But they could not completely escape the malign influences of a slum culture emanating in slum conditions, and dislocated families for some. This urban youth culture was becoming more and more pronounced in the 1960s and 1970s, largely due to the dominance of an urban born and bred youth. As before, the need for money made some students play truant. The same need to money often compelled some parents to stay 'in-doors', and thus left their children alone in the location. Peter captured the above thus:

> "There was a lot of playing truant (**ukutshunga**) those days. Children liked to go to the dumping grounds (**itipu**), searching for food that they would sell. The problem is that there were no parents associations. People did their own things. Some parents were staying at the places of their employment, and left their children alone."[21]

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21   Interview with Peter 12/1/93.

Further, according to Chops:

> "Students gambled, but on a small scale. This was largely due to the influence of location life. But teachers were very strict."[22]

Another influence was street fighting involving the stabbing and stone throwing. Carrying a knife became part and parcel of defining urban youth. According to Andile, who was a student during the period under consideration:

> "There is also that dimension, carrying knives. We grew up carrying knives although I have never stabbed anyone. I carried my 'okapi'[23] until I was at university. The reason is that I don't want people to undermine me. I remember when we were attacked by the 'Boers' (**amabhulu**) on campus, we carried our knives, determined that we would stab them."[24]

Peter agreed with the above view. In his words:

> "Stabbing was a different story. Everyone carried a knife. As a result, the minute you quarreled with someone, you would resort to a knife. That was common. .... In the 1960s and early 1970s, when political organisations were banned, we were not interested in politics. There was a lot of corruption and mischief in the form of street battles and stabbing. These affected every youth, whether student or not. There was nothing constructive worth mentioning. Recreational facilities were not enough, available on week-ends and demanding money."[25]

Street battles, and battles to control territories often associated with 'tsotsis', continued to affect students. Some categories in an area would bury their differences and come together in defence of the territory. Andile gives the following account:

> "There used to be battles, that is one thing that was fairly common in the location when we were growing, even before our times. There would be battles between

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22 Interview with Chops 20/12/92.
23 A certain type of a knife, with a wooden handle, which was very popular amongst 'tsotsis' and the urban youth as such.
24 Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
25 Interview with Peter 12/1/93.

Tsolo, Mekeni or Duncan. In such cases, students, **ngxungxus** and so on from one section would join forces against the youth from the other section. This was made possible by the fact that students often are friendly with tsotsis."[26]

The influence of 'tsotsis' on students was endorsed by Andile during the interview. According to him, "some students are naughty (**stout**),[27] having 'tsotsi' friends. They in turn earn the title of being 'tsotsis', even though they are students." However, during the above mentioned battles, everybody would be involved, including those students who did not regard themselves as the criminal 'tsotsi'. Andile recalls:

"We grew up fighting those battles, although they were less vicious that before. We used to fight with bricks, there would be stabbings, but not like before where even axes were used, an ugly thing. ...... In some cases, students from various locations would fight at school during these battles."[28]

It seems that in most cases students were never involved in the initial battles, but would be caught in the cross fire, simply because they happened to stay in a particular section. This point was made by Peter:

"During those days street battles (**amadabi**) were common. One section would wage a battle with another section. In some cases, people from different sections would have clashed at a beerhall (**kwajabulani**). Such clashes often ended up in battles involving sections. The day the battle starts, no one at any time and day from one section would set foot in the other section without being molested when seen. One went to the other section entirely at one's risk. This sometimes meant that one could not go to school."[29]

However, it seems as if apart from involvement in the above battles, students, on the whole, were not heavily involved in criminality. Referring to the relationship between students and the anti-social category of the youth called **tsotsis**, Chops categorically stated:

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26 Idem.
27 Afrikaans term for 'naughty', popular amongst township people and people from the farms.
28 Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
29 Interview with Peter 12/1/93.

"Students were completely different from **tsotsis**. That (grabbing) was done by the youth that was not schooling. The latter were known in the location, and people were warned against them."[30]

Peter points out that in terms of dress, students wore clean clothes, "even if they were old."

"Further, students were discreet and secretive in the use of drugs, unlike **iingxungxu**, who did such things in the open, and in a defiant manner. During those days it was not common for students to smoke. Those who did were discreet. Drinking was very rare."[31]

The only category that seems to have been conspicuous by its non-participation in these battles were the 'bumpkins' (**imixhaka**). According to Andile: "They do not participate in these battles but tend to be caught in the cross fire." As before, some of them "graduate to become accepted in the location by participating in these battles, bringing their heroism from the rural areas."[32]

At another (lighter) level, students were heavily influenced by the 'bright boys' or 'clevers'. As will be seen below, from about the mid to late 1960s, members of this category were drawn largely from the working urban born and bred youth, as opposed to the children of houseowners who were renting out rooms. With the introduction of Mdantsane, and the disestablishment of the East London locations, the wood and iron sections were the first to be removed, with the implication that house owners had to forfeit rent. The latter's children, who were not educated and did not work, were left without money to sustain their expensive style of existence. But their influence, characterised by dress and a quest for women, remained well after their disappearance as a category.

An enduring division in the townships is between the urban born and bred, called **amajitha**, and those from rural areas, called **imixhaka**. One crucial way of making the distinction was the style of dress. Asked what kinds of activities the youth were involved in before 1976, Andile responded:

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30   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
31   Interview with Peter 12/1/93.
32   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.

"It is difficult to say. That is a very interesting question in the sense that even though I grew up in East London I only remember that we liked clothes and women, there was nothing in particular that was happening besides sport."[33]

The urban born and bred youth followed an American style of dress which they ordered by mail order from Johannesburg based firms like Kays, Swanks, and so on. In Andile's words:

"Those clothes were identified with the **amajitha**. 'Tsotsis' in the sense of location people were identified by that type of dress. At this level, both the elite and the **ngxungxu**[34] wore the same attire. The latter robbed to buy these clothes."[35]

Like the **ngxungxus** in the 1950s, **amajitha** were very influential on students. Some students left school after completing their junior certificate in order to work and earn money to buy clothes, inter alia. As Andile puts it:

"Education was seen as a delay. The urgent thing was to work and have your own money to buy clothes and compete with others. There was a widespread notion that factories were paying well. ...... The problem of unemployment was not as rife as it is now. One left school with the hope that getting a job wouldn't be a problem."[36]

Peter had more to say about why this category wielded so much influence among the youth:

"They were popular in the location, even amongst women. What they were doing was the dominant thing to do as youth. They had good things like musical records and record players. People would visit them and enjoy themselves."[37]

Having said the above, a point that needs to be stated is that during this period, teachers, as in the past, played an important role in countering an anti-social influence amongst students. They were in most cases a deterrent to the influence exerted on students by their

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33   Idem.
34   Andile describes **ingxungxu** thus: "During our times, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, **iingxungxu** were identified with **isikoli** (riff raff, won't work), a mischievous (**stout**) person." (Interview 5/11/90). It seems as if this could be the criminal 'tsotsi' element.
35   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
36   Idem.
37   Interview with Peter 12/1/93.

non-school going peers. The methods applied by teachers in enforcing discipline had not changed. Students were severely punished, sometimes with negative results, like high drop out rates.

"Teachers were very strict. They beat students who dodged school. Some students ended up leaving school because they feared severe punishment. There are people who left school in this manner. Others preferred to follow the attraction of the city and location. Other drop outs ended up joining youth in vying for position to become **bosses**. Others played dice and spin on a big scale. They were called **gamblers**."[38]

It is quite clear from the above that the intentions of teachers were often good. However, in a rapidly changing situation like the one South Africa was/is going through, the future challenge for teachers lied in evolving equally effective methods that were less crude, influenced by less authoritarian and more democratic methods. For example, already in the 1960s, there were parents who began to challenge the teachers' right to beat their children. Further, we shall see that in years to come, this practice was to come under attack from students and their organisations, at times with disastrous results, as will be argued.

The Tsotsis.

Various youth categories, outside students, existed during the decade preceding the 1976 Soweto students' uprisings. These categories were not new as such. However, their nature and form were undergoing changes. A good example is the 'bumpkin'. By the 1960s, certainly the 1970s, the influence of urbanisation had had its mark on people in rural areas, and the youth in particular.[39] Further, the growing number of people from rural areas, especially after the establishment of Mdantsane, who were beginning to outnumber those born and bred in East London, made such categorisation something of a joke and ineffectual. Be that as it may, these categories still existed, albeit in a refined form. One of these categories, and the one we shall be addressing ourselves to is an old youth category, namely, the 'tsotsis'.

Who were the 'tsotsis'?

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38   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
39   See Mayer (1980) op. cit.

'Tsotsi' is one of those terms whose meaning kept on changing to an extent that by the 1970s, for example, there was no longer any single definition of the term. In the past, say the 1940s and 1950s, it was possible to identify a 'tsotsi' by his dress, secret language, and so on, for example. By the late 1960s, for example, their influence with regard to dress and language had spread, within limits, to other youth categories like students. To be 'tsotsi', in a certain sense, began to be associated with being urban (**umjitha**). However, there continued to exist the criminal element, which dropped out in the early years of their schooling and not working. The level of education seemed to have been important in determining the distinction between an **umjitha** and a criminal (**isigebenga**). A person with a standard six certificate, like before, would not be classified as a criminal 'tsotsi'. Chops was emphatic that people with a minimum qualification of standard six were never 'tsotsis':

> "No. It was possible for such people to be friendly with **ngxungxus** and **tsotsis** due to growing up together and staying in the same area. I was in a similar position where after school and during week-ends I would be with my friends who were not at school and not working, but making money. Some were **ngxungxus** and **tsotsis**, but they have since reformed. They were not **grabbers** as such and did not stab since we were boxers. Boxers used their fists and not the knife."[40]

The latter part of the above quotation, seems to confirm the above divisions within the broad 'tsotsi' category, namely urban born non-criminal and the criminal youth.

As regards the non-criminal youth (**amajitha**): The roots of this category can be traced to the category of 'bright boys' or 'clevers' of the 1940s and 1950s. It will be recalled that a significant part of this category was drawn from the children of shebeen queens and house owners who rented out their property in the wood and iron sections of the East London locations. The demolition of the wood and iron sections of Tsolo meant that landowners lost their revenue, generated from rents. This in turn affected those 'bright boys' who relied on hand outs from their mothers who were landladies. Interviewees remarked that they became a pathetic lot as they were not educated and not even working. They had been a youth category of real influence but were economically residual and parasitical. It is precisely because of their parasitical nature that they were called 'bright boys'. The allegation was that the 'bright' boys "thought they were bright, yet when they grew older

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40   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.

they were shown to have been stupid, they would be useless. It is true, there are old people we are told were **tsotsis**, who were bright during their days. But they never built a future for themselves, they have no profession to ensure that they would make a living."[41]

What distinguished the 'bright boys' from other youth categories is that they were fashion-conscious, almost worshipping clothing. It is this influence that continued to exist well after the disappearance of this category in its original form. We have seen above that the influence even spread to students. In the late 1960s and the 1970s, though, the youth that took over the title 'bright boys' or the 'enlightened youth' (**amajitha**) were the educated[42] and working youth. They were known as the **bright** or **enlightened** youth.

> In terms of attire, certain clothes would be in fashion. The enlightened youth in the location would follow that fashion and this is how one would identify them. To be part of this group, you needed money to go to the bioscope and buy whatever was fashionable at the time."[43]

Given the places that some were working at, it was possible for them to afford money to buy clothes that were in fashion. This is how Andile describes them:

> "There are those who have been to school, leaving school with matric and work. ... They are well dressed, very neat, but they are 'tsotsis' in the sense that they grew up in the location, they are not 'tsotsis' in the sense that they rob people. ... They sort of choose the type of work they do, they do not any job, they tend to go to popular places like Wilson Rowntree, Johnson and Johnson."[44]

As we have seen above, the **amajitha**, like the 'bright boys' of past, had an enormous influence on students, in particular.

A feature of the post-1964 period was that criminal tsotsis were becoming a dominant force, particularly amongst the youth. It is argued that this development was made possible by urbanisation and the fact that children were now staying with their parents, thus

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41   Idem.
42   'Educated' is here used in the sense used by East London people, namely referring to a person with a minimum educational qualification of a standard six.
43   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
44   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.

changing the demography. Above all, according to interviewees, young people in East London did not take education seriously. Recalling those days, the late 1960s, Chops reminisced:

"When I was growing up, the location was a real location. Crime was the order of the day. It was difficult, for instance, to go to the bioscope. If you wanted to, you had to be accompanied by an old person who will keep the money. There were older members of the youth (**ooMack**), who used to 'grab', meaning forcibly take money from us as younger members of the youth. They did so even if one were on the doorsteps of the cinema. We were used to this. Even in our homes, they were used to this. For instance, they would understand at home if you reported that money given to you to buy grocery from the shop had been 'grabbed'. In that case they would send an older person to do the shopping. Even the cents we used to take with us to school to buy food would be 'grabbed'."[45]

We see from the above that 'grabbing' was to them a way of living and survival. Apart from 'grabbing', they also robbed people in the location.[46] Explaining their place and role in society, Chops averred:

"They were also part of the youth, slightly older than others. They were not schooling, neither were they working. They were staying in the location. Our older brothers used to break into shops in town. They were also involved in robbing people in the location."[47]

As we have already noted, constant battles to control and protect territories continued. It was often difficult for youth, be it student, worker, what have you, from one part of the location to dare set foot in another part without dire consequences. 'Tsotsis' were in the forefront of these escapades.

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45   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
46   It should be noted that Chops specifically refers to robbing people 'in the location', and not robbing as such. People who robbed and stole in white areas and businesses were not seen as criminals in the locations. They were seen as people who were, in the difficult conditions of Africans in South Africa, trying to make a living (**ukuziphilela**).
47   Interview with Chops 20/12/91. Peter (interview 12/1/93) agreed with the above version of the criminal 'tsotsi'.

"If you were not staying in an area, you wouldn't set foot in that area, even in broad daylight, without being attacked. An attack entailed taking whatever one had, to 'grab', so to speak, and they would let you go. They wouldn't attack one physically."[48]

It has been stated above that students, and the youth as such, were invariably drawn into the street battles. The difference, though, between the youth as such and the criminal youth, was that for the latter, these battles were the order of the day. Stabbing, which is one way the battles took, was another feature in the life of criminal 'Tsotsis'. This took basically two forms, namely, murdering people when robbing them, and fighting amongst themselves, in order to decide who the **boss** of an area was. With regard to the latter, namely the question of deciding the 'boss', Chops explains thus:

"In each section of the location, there were people who were known as **bosses**, who were in control of their territories. They would be generally known in the location. They did not last long as **bosses**, as they would be dethroned by others amongst them."[49]

The notion of grading one's superiority in terms of fighting skills was pervasive amongst the youth in general. According to Chops, this was the case even with students, for example. The difference in this regard was that fists, and not knives or sticks were used:

Those above 18 years were bosses because of their boxing skills, both inside and outside the ring."[50]

As before, the film seems to have been a major influence on the 'tsotsis'. Unlike other categories of the youth, who went to the cinema, attending the same films as 'tsotsis', the latter seem to have used the film to further their own sinister intentions:

"The greatest influence in crime in this area was the bioscope. Films had a contribution to crime rate here, particularly the Western films of 'crooks and cowboys', robberies, agents and so on. These have an influence on people. People here like the bioscope. It is quite common to find them talking about these films.

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48   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
49   Idem.
50   Idem.

In some cases, some even practise some of the things they see there. Some successfully, others less so. Novels like those written by James Hadley Chase were also influential and contributed to the increase in crime."[51]

Despite the pervasiveness of 'tsotsis' during this period, they did not establish organised groups, as was the case in the Reef.[52] Referring to the question of youth gangs in East London during the period under review, Chops was emphatic:

"When I was growing up, there were no such groups. The youth of our time were not organising themselves in Johannesburg style gangsters. What was prevalent were people who were known to be stabbing or boxing, there was nothing more than that. Police those days were carrying sticks, not guns, and on the beat, without any vehicles. We haven't even had cases of bank robbery, for instance here."[53]

Peter claims that some operated as individuals, but others operated in small groups:

"You would find them sitting and smoking dagga at night. On Friday they would rob people coming from work with their wages. They attacked people and forced them to hand over their money. In some cases people would be stabbed. They raped women."[54]

Iingxungxu

This is arguably the most difficult category to define. The Xhosa term **ukungxungxa** literally means, to be temporary, like when you temporarily stay with friends or relatives, whilst searching for a permanent place to stay. In terms of a job, the term, in the above literal sense of the term, would mean to be employed on a part-time, casual basis, as opposed to one who is in permanent employment. At the best of times, there seems nothing sinister in the term. Yet, in the context of East London, the term assumes various meanings and its use suggests negative connotations.

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51 Idem.
52 This is an interesting point about East London locations, namely the fact that, despite numerous influences, particularly the influence of Johannesburg, for example, on dress, the practise of organised youth gangs never took root.
53 Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
54 Interview with Peter 12/1/93.

There seems to be general agreement that people falling under this category were those who dropped out of school in the lower classes or never went to school at all, and at the same time not in any permanent employment. In a sense, they were in a similar position to that of 'tsotsis', both the criminals and the 'bright' boys. But, unlike the **tsotsis**, who were neither at school nor working, **ngxungxus** earned their living by working on a part time basis in places like the golf course, fresh produce market, and so on.[55] Their influence, however, spread to students, especially at primary school. The almost compelling need for the urban youth as such to get money for entertainment made casual jobs attractive to the youth, including students. According to Chops:

> "They influenced in some cases pupils at school, in some cases the latter ending up leaving school. On Fridays, for instance, some pupils wouldn't go to school because they wanted to cad at the golf course, or sell newspapers, or the market, to get money. The youth involved in this part-time activity was categorised **iingxungxu**. They were not involved in **grabbing**.[56]

Pupils or students who participated in part-time, casual jobs on week-ends and holidays were not necessarily classified **iingxungxu**. It seems that it is only when they dropped out of school to be full-time in this activity that they earned the title of **ingxungxu**.

The bumpkins (imixhaka)

By the late 1960s, this category hardly existed in its original form of people coming from rural areas, completely astounded by the fast life of a South African city, with many cars, lights and so on. Longer periods in cities and urbanisation as such had an influence on those coming from rural areas. Chops gives us a useful summary of this phenomenon:

> "A **bumpkin** in the first place was a person who grew up in the country side. Upon arrival in the urban areas they would be dull, hence the label. In some cases, they arrived in urban areas with preconceived ideas from being warned back at home about what to expect. For example, being told that in the urban areas, one should not pay attention if called by anyone. Or that if one did not stab with a knife, one

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55 Andile, as we saw earlier on, does not seem to make this distinction. For him, the criminal 'tsotsi' and the **ingxungxu** are one and the same. However, for purposes of this study, the distinction will be maintained.

56 Interview with Chops 20/12/91.

was a **bumpkin**. Such people ended up stabbing a lot, murdering people and ended up in prison."[57]

Chops' view is that the above is a thing of the past:

> "But I must say that these days there is no such thing. I think people have now developed. We now stay together with people from rural areas without any problems."[58]

In the above quotation, Chops was clearly referring to the period after 1976, when a conscious attempt was made to break down the old divisions under the influence of politics. In the period under review, that is the period before 1976, divisions between the urban born and rural youth were still pronounced. According to Andile, "those are enduring concepts of the youth in East London. They were there when we grew up."[59] The difference is that by the late 1960s and 1970s, the definition of **imixhaka** had changed. The main criterion was whether you were born and bred in the location or not. According to Andile, they "may have parents in East London", but if they grew up in rural areas, only coming to East London in their late teens to work or study, they would be regarded as **imixhaka**. Further, **imixhaka** were distinguished from **amajitha** by what Andile calls "their mannerisms which tend to be much more reserved and conservative, and their dress."[60] In terms of dress, and unlike the urban born and bred:

> "**Imixhaka** just put on anything, put on whatever pair of trousers came their way, a pair of trousers without any recognised label. They don't pay attention to detail. Even if one puts on clean clothes, the way they wear them makes them a breed apart."[61]

Be that as it may, by the 1970s, in particular, the urban/rural divide was no longer so salient. As already stated, with urbanisation and deteriorating conditions in the rural areas, more and more people from the latter areas came to the city. Already in the 1950s, the composition of the African population in the East London locations was favouring people from rural areas, something that meant that the influence of those born and bred in East

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57   Idem.
58   Idem.
59   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
60   Idem.
61   Idem.

London was strongly diluted. Further, with the establishment of Mdantsane, and the removal of people from Tsolo and Mekeni, sections, especially the former, that boasted of typical East London people (**abantu baseMonti**), people who were conscious and promoted these divisions, the influence of the urban born and bred was clearly on the decline. Now and again, stalwarts would bring these divisions to the fore:

> "But what is interesting is that the tendency is that if that particular person[62] becomes 'too big for his boots'[63], they always trace your history, telling you, 'come on, we know where you come from', that still is the case in East London even today. .... East London people trace other people's histories."[64]

Such remarks, though, are more yearnings about the past than expressive of deep antagonistic divisions as was the case in the past. Referring to the influence of the urban born and bred, Andile emphatically declared:

> "But this is on the decline as the East London of Tsolo and Mekeni is dying. People who belong to that East London are old now, from their forties onwards. That is where you can still find those distinctions, from old people."[65]

Youth and recreation.

On the whole, as we have already seen, there was little available by way of recreational facilities for the youth. This is how Peter describes the range of recreational facilities in Duncan Village in the 1960s and 1970s:

> "There was a community centre. In it there was, for example, a swimming pool. Each and every week-end we used to attend musical shows. During the week we struggled to get money to cover admission fee. Again people like Kente[66] were not scarce, including musical groups from Johannseburg. The other form of entertainment was the bioscope."[67]

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62   Refers to a person with rural origins who has been 'accepted' by and mixes with the urban born and bred.
63   One became 'too big for his boots', according to Andile, if one were perceived "to be troublesome, for example, you are a 'womaniser'", and are more popular among women than the urban born and bred.
64   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
65   Idem.
66   A famous playwright at the time from Johannesburg.
67   Interview with Peter 12/1/93.

Sport and the cinema continued to be the most popular amongst the youth. Like before, it was possible to find youth from the various categories coming together to either witness a game or watch a movie. Week-end cinema attendance, and sport during seasons, were important socially and highly popular.

Sport in East London was idolised. In Andile's terms, an "enduring aspect of East London is socialisation around sport like rugby, even to this day."[68] By the 1960's, boxing had established itself as a revered sporting and income generating activity. Rugby continued to be dominant too.

> "Here in Duncan Village there were two sporting activities, rugby and boxing. If one did not participate in any of these, one would be seen as a 'bumpkin' (umxhaka), not knowing anything..... Older boys divided between those who were in boxing and those who during week-ends, went to the rugby field called Red Park in the Tsolo section."[69]

In a violence prone place like the African locations as such, with its problems of breakdown in parental control over their children, insufficient schools, and so on, sport in East London locations, for example, played an important role in channelling away youth from anti-social tendencies. According to Chops:

> "I played both rugby and boxing. Discipline was instilled. For example, drinking and smoking were discouraged. Unruly people were whipped into shape. There were about four boxing clubs in Duncan Village, which is a lot."[70]

The youth was drawn to sport in broadly two ways. There were those who actively participated in the particular sport. Those not actively participating, including women, were supporters of one club or the other.

The reverence for sport, boxing for instance, can best be explained by Chops:

> "If you were a boxer and you were known to be one, a person not knowing you would possible be new, no one would trouble you. If a stranger enquired after a

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68   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
69   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
70   Idem.

boxer, for example, he would not be attacked as would normally be the case if he was making an inquiry about an unknown person. Normally, if you are a stranger, you lose your wallet, get attacked and so on."[71]

Further, sport continued to ease the antagonisms between urban born and bred and rural youth (**imixhaka**). Moreover, if a rural born youth were good in sport, it was easy for them to get schools and/or prestigious jobs. As Andile explains:

"If you were a good rugby player and you played for Swallows,[72] you would get a good job, like being a Lexington salesman, or liqour firm representative, or insurance. Even some migrant workers who were good rugby players got school and work opportunities by virtue of being good rugby players. This is where it would be interesting. Though **imixhaka** would take time to be accepted, you'd tend to take short-cuts if you were a good sportsman."[73]

As regards boxing: For some, particularly those that were not educated, boxing was more than just a recreational activity, to while away time. It was a means of income, too.

"Boxing was also a means of income for some of these people. This is probably one of the reasons why people who were not educated ended up joining boxing clubs. They saw people like Happy Boy Mgxaji, who was not educated, fighting for big moneys. That encouraged people and at the same time instilled a certain type of discipline."[74]

Boxing, unlike rugby, and to a certain extent cricket, only started to gain prominence in East London in the early 1960s, with Lawrence Zondo as the first professional boxer. However, it is in the late 1960s and 1970s that it reached its peak, producing national champions. In 1978, Nkosana 'Happy Boy' Mgxaji, lost a bid to capture the world boxing title.

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71   Idem.
72   An old East London club identified with the urban born and bred of East London.
73   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
74   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.

<u>Youth and politics before 1976</u>

By 1968, a new form of political resistance, Black Consciousness, led by university students, was formed. The South African Students' Association was formally established in July 1969, with Steve Biko as its first President.[75] In 1973, Biko, together with seven SASO leaders was banned and restricted to King William's Town. He immediately formed a branch of BCP (Black Community Programs), inspiring some young students and intellectuals in the Border region. Apart from Black Consciousness, a number of political prisoners released from Robben Island were banished to Mdantsane from the mid-1960's. As will become clear later, some of them cautiously began to establish contacts with students and young educated workers.

However, the re-emergence of resistance was by the mid-1970's at its infancy in East London. Firstly, the level of political repression was such that people felt powerless to deal with the might of the National Party government with its instruments of coercion. According to Chops:

> Generally, politics was not popular. Our parents didn't even want to see us raising the thumb.[76] I would say that people, particularly old people, were afraid to talk about politics, ever since the banning of political organisations. There were no political discussions and people lived as if they knew nothing. Things, of course changed in 1976.[77]

It was not only 'old people' who did not talk about politics. The youth, though not necessarily as intimidated as their parents, hardly participated in political discussions.

> "It was not common to find the youth talking about politics before 1976. My first encounter with politics was through Lex, who was at St Johns College in Umtata, and who was involved in sport. He was my neighbour. We met during holidays with some of his friends."[78]

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75   Stubbs A (ed.) (1979. <u>Steve Biko: I Write What I Like</u> (London:Heinemann).
76   Raising the thumb in an upright position was a sign of identifying with the African National Congress (ANC), which, as intimated, was banned by this time.
77   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
78   Idem.

Andile, who was a high school student in Mdantsane in 1976 candidly responded thus when asked what their central activities were before the Soweto uprisings:

"It is difficult to say. That is a very interesting question in the sense that even though I grew up in East London, I only remember that we liked clothes and women, there was nothing in particular that was happening besides sport, rugby and boxing."[79]

It is only with the Soweto uprisings that the political consciousness of the East London youth was raised.

"My brother was close to Steve Biko. The dominant trend then was Black Consciousness. The Soweto uprisings of 1976 had an influence here. Schools were boycotted, the youth beaten and so on. At that time workers started organising themselves and embarking on strikes."[80]

But on the whole, the East London youth did not intervene in the political life of that region until late in the 1970s.

"Teachers before 1976 had a discouraging influence. Things did not take root until 1979, with the birth of SAAWU (South African Allied Workers' Union)."[81]

The other factor that made East London youth lag behind was that the dominant political movement was the Black Consciousness Movement, which was essentially an elite movement. It was initially formed by university students. Although BPC was not a students' organisation, it was established to cater essentially for former university students. Without any university, and few university students, Duncan Village was hardly a recruiting ground for the Black Consciousness Movement. Further, educated youth in East London and Ciskei found employment in the Ciskei, as civil servants at the Ciskei Territorial Authority (CTA). According to Andile, though not paying well, CTA was the "main employer of matriculants wanting a better[82] job."[83] The same could be said of university

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79   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
80   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
81   Idem.
82   'Better' in the sense that unlike in industry, where, though better paying, conditions of work were appalling, civil servants were white collar workers, enjoyed a degree of work security and pensions.
83   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.

graduates. CTA's offices were in Zwelitsha, King Williams Town. It is here that one found BPC members like Mluleki George and others. Finally, Steve Biko, an influential leader of Black Consciousness was restricted to King Williams Town. A lot of BC activities centred around him, and thus in King Williams Town.

It should be borne in mind that the 1976 Soweto uprisings were spearheaded by secondary school students, under the auspices of the South African Students' Movement (SASM), which had its base in the Transvaal.[84] Some analysts attribute the centrality of secondary school students in the uprisings to a number of factors which warrant repetion.

The expansion of secondary education in African urban townships is, with justice, often cited as a key factor. It will be recalled that secondary educational facilities before the advent of Bantu Education in the mid-1950s were concentrated in rural areas, for example, Healdtown Institution, Freemantle High school, Clarkebury, to mention a few. There were very few secondary schools in urban areas. It is, thus, not surprising that students' struggles from the 1940s to the early 1970s took place in boarding schools in these rural areas.[85] Things started to change when, as we saw earlier, capital started to pressurise the state for semi-skilled and skilled African labour. The state's policy preventing the growth of urban secondary education for Africans frustrated the development of a skilled African labour force, hence the pressure the latter started exerting. The results started to show in 1972 when "the state changed its budgetary policy in relation to urban schooling, making far more money available for urban black schools than before", with the consequence that between "1970 and 1975, the numbers of secondary school students rose from 122 489 to 318 568".[86] In terms of the number of students, there were in 1975, "3 700 000 African school students."[87]

Demographically, this meant that there was an increasing number of young people in urban areas. For example, according to Hyslop, about "45.5% of the total African population is under twenty; but some analysts put the figure much higher."[88]

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84   For an historical account of SASM, see Diseko op. cit. See also the next chapter.
85   See Hyslop J (1987). Food, Authority and politics: Student riots in South Africa 1945-1976. In Africa Perspective, Vol 1, Nos 3 and 4, June.
86   Hyslop (1988) op. cit. p 184.
87   Hyslop J (1988/9). Schools, Unemployment and Youth: Origins and Significance of Student and Youth Movements, 1976-1987. In Perspectives in Education, Vol 10, No 2, p 64.
88   Hyslop (1988/9) op. cit. p 65.

The decisive factor, it must be argued, which played a crucial role in instilling a militant political resistance among students, was what Bundy, borrowing terminology from Hobsbawm refers to as "The 'potential overproduction of intellectuals',[89] which, in the case of South Africa meant that "more and more people were being educationally 'prepared' for a job market which afforded less and less opportunities.[90]

The above scenario neatly fits the situation in the Reef, in particular, but certainly not Duncan Village. We have seen that it is precisely during this period of secondary school expansion in urban areas that the only high school in the area was closed, making it difficult for struggling parents to afford to send their children to Mdantsane, which was nearest and perhaps the cheapest in the sense that students could stay at home and travel to school daily. If Bundy and Hyslop's argument is accepted, it can also be used to further explain why the East London students were not as politically advanced as their Soweto counterparts. Further, both Bundy and Hyslop argue that the other closely related factor contributing to students' militancy was the 'potential overproduction of intellectuals'. It is argued that this was not the case in East London in the mid-1970s. The problem of unemployment only became evident in East London in the early 1980s. As Andile and other interviewees claim, by 1976, students were dropping their studies after Form three to look for work in order to buy clothes. Further, with the advent of Ciskei, a number of jobs became available for matriculants and graduates, including those who were against the bantustan concept. As a bantustan, the Ciskei offered greener pastures for career oriented young intellectuals.

Lastly, Hyslop points out that in the Reef, there was "the growth of a distinctively urban youth culture, relatively educated, totally urbanised, sympathetic to statements of black political identity", and different "from the previously dominant, rather lumpen, sub-culture of the **mapantsula**"[91]. In Duncan Village, as we have seen, the dominant youth culture was still dominated by the 'tsotsi' influence. In this regard, Andile categorically stated:

> "The other thing about East London is that it has got tendencies of being conservative. For instance the 'hippie-style',[92] which took Johannesburg by storm created controversy in East London. Die-hards were against this fashion."[93]

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89   Bundy (1987) op. cit. p 311.
90   Hyslop (1988/9) op. cit. p 63.
91   Hyslop (1988) op. cit. p 185.
92   This style, which, inter alia, manifested itself in the form of 'bell bottom' pants, was popular amongst Black Consciousness university students. (Personal experiences).
93   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.

The Youth as they Matured

In the 1960s and early 1970s, it was not particularly difficult for youths of different categories to find work. As regards students, they were a reasonably controlled and controllable group. As we have seen, this was amongst others, made possible by the intervention of teachers, who were feared and respected by both parents and students. Further, students who remained in the system were career-oriented, and took their education seriously:

> "A standard six certificate was still important, say in the late 1960s. Schools with good results were talked about. There was only one high school. There was no teacher training college, and no technical college."[94]

As stated above, during the 1960s, there was a demand for semi-skilled Africans, although wages were low:

> "Work was not scarce at all. When I started working in 1974, when I passed form 3, I found work at the Trust Bank as a labourer, earning R14.00 a week, which was second only to CDA where the wages was R18.00 a week... What I mean is that you wouldn't find, say, a father not working because there was no work. Old boys in the location were not working because there was no work. When I was working, I would come across people who asked me, in work uniform, whether I did not want work. I would tell others about such vacancies. Work was certainly not as scarce as today."[95]

The introduction of young educated Africans in semi-skilled and skilled work was to have important implications towards the end of the decade of the 1970s, a period associated with the rise of a militant trade union movement. It is young men like Thozamile Gqweta,[96] who were students in the 1960s and early 1970s, who were to play a dominant role in the political and economic struggles of the late 1970s and 1980s.

With regard to 'tsotsis', the pattern was similar to the one discussed above, in the 1940's and 1950's. Some tsotsis reformed after circumcision. In the words of Chops:

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[94] Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
[95] Idem.
[96] Gqweta became president of the South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU).

"Some were involved in **tsotsism** as a hobby. Students were regarded as weaklings. But some of the **tsotsis** changed their lifestyle after undergoing circumcision and as they grew older.   One would find them working, good looking and progressing. Some run their own shebeens, and so on."[97]

This, according to Chops was the case, even with those who **grabbed**. He insists that in the 1960's to mid-1970's, "**grabbing** was a stage in the life of boys which came to an end at a later stage, unlike today where people engage in robbing people for a living."[98]   Peter contends:

"Some were involved more because they were going through a stage of 'boyish' mischief (**ubukhwenkwe**). After circumcision, they would reform and get married and establish a family.   Some of them are now involved in the political and community struggles."[99]

What seems to have been popular, certainly amongst young boys, were casual jobs. For the young in the locations, it was important to go to the cinema on week-ends, hence the desperation to get money, even for school going boys.

"When we were young, we used to go to a certain fishery shop.   On Saturdays we went there to raise money to go to the bioscope. Things were relatively easy then. People's standards of living were not high. We made do with a damper (**vetkoek**) those days. We used to look with appreciation to young men with motor cars which they used as taxis. We look for part-time work from them, we washed their cars during week-ends to get money to go to the bioscope.[100]

At any rate, the point that is being made here is that jobs were available for those who wanted work. Some 'tsotsis' took up the opportunity. They were thus regarded as having reformed, in the sense that they were responsible and earning a living to support themselves and their families, bearing in mind that East London was known for its low wages. Further, it meant that they no longer stabbed, grabbed, robbed and beat women. They would, however, be called 'Bra', a sign of respect shown to a young man.

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97   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
98   Idem.
99   Interview with Peter 12/1/93.
100 Idem.

As before some never reformed, even after circumcision.

> "But there are cases where **tsotsis** did not live long lives. They would be stabbed to death in revenge due to one's past of thuggery. It was rare to find a person who was a boss living long enough to reform. They often ended up dead or paralysed in grudge attacks. The latter normally ended up being drunkards and drug addicts, incapable of doing anything worthwhile for themselves."[101]

Some ended up in prison. Accounts are told of what prison does to the youth, making them hardened criminals and jail birds. But there are instances where prison had a positive influence. In this regard, boxing saved some young people who found themselves behind prison bars. Chops recalled one such case:

> "Some **tsotsis** committed crimes and were arrested, spending time in prison. On their return, they would reform and participate in boxing. One of the reasons was that prison is a jungle where the only recognised law is the survival of the fittest. Some of them learnt boxing for self defence purposes. Some ended up being professional boxers. For example, there is a guy who was a jail bird who became a professional boxer at the age of 27 years as a result of his boxing experience in prison. He fought a few fights and became a professional. He was good in boxing and the stadium rose when he got into the ring. People used to scream, 'bandit, bandit, bandit,....' (**ibhantinti, ibhantinti, ibhantinti, ...**). There are other similar cases."[102]

Chops conceded, though, that these were isolated cases.

As regards the **ngxungxus**: According to Chops:

> "In fact, if you went to the golf course, you would still find old people staying there. Others are sickly and drink **jabulani** (so 'kaffir' beer). They have no idea of life outside caddying, their entire life is spent there, from the time they abandoned school because they were afraid teachers would send boys to fetch them in the location in some cases. They have no home to stay in, they stay in the bushes and

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101 Idem.
102 Idem.

are avoiding the police as they did not have proper documents. Some of them do not know how else they could live. They wouldn't know what they would do if one removed them from the golf course... But some do reform. The golf course is dominated by rich whites, big shots, who are directors of CDA, Bryants and so on. Some of these whites identify some of their cadders and offer them employment in their factories and firms, knowing that on week-ends they would cad."[103]

Others, according to Les,[104] became professional golfers. Both Les and Chops, however, agree that it is a tiny minority that made use of golfing skills to help themselves.

The **imixhaka**, in their original form, it seems, were a dying category. Long periods in urban areas made it difficult for them to continue identifying with their peers and associations in rural areas. We have seen that some of them ended up identifying with some of the youth categories, for example, the 'tsotsis'. The 'homeboys' (**abakhaya**) associations, which were quite powerful in preserving rural values, could no longer hold as before, as some migrants were increasingly identifying with urban areas.

Concluding Remarks

We have seen above that the first flush of unity brought about by politics around 1960 could not be sustained in Duncan Village, despite the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement later in the decade. From the whole decade from the mid-1960s, the youth of Duncan Village was fragmented, showing little interest in politics. At the same time, the establishment of Mdantsane meant that more and better schools became available for the youth of Duncan Village whose parents could afford the travelling expenses, and who were interested in education. As families became stable, both in Duncan Village and Mdantsane, so did they start staying with their children. The growth of manufacturing industry in East London, and the Border region as such, whatever its limits, led to the employment of school-trained youth in industries whose conditions of employment were bad and racist, and paying low wages. The significance of these developments, though, was not evident until after the 1976 Soweto uprisings.

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103   Idem.
104   Conversation with Les 18/1/93.

CHAPTER 5

THE MAKING OF THE POLITICAL YOUTH IN THE EAST LONDON LOCATION OF DUNCAN VILLAGE: 1976 - 1985.

Introduction

This section will focus on the period between 1976 and 1985. This is the period between the outbreak of the 1976 Soweto uprisings and the Duncan Village uprisings of 1985. Focus will be given on the making of the political youth in East London and problems it faced on the eve of the unprecedent uprisings in East London. The argument advanced is that 1976 took the East London youth by surprise. However, the event served as the proverbial spark that started the prairie fire. In a sense, it will be argued, 1985 took the political youth, despite the fact that they were then organised into youth organisations, once again, off guard. Due to internal divisions and neglecting the school drop outs and non-working criminal youth element, they could not give direction to events as they unfolded in 1985.

With the 1976 Soweto uprisings, the East London African students felt bound to 'do something' in the light of the actions of their counterparts in the Transvaal. However, the fact that the immediate cause of the Soweto uprisings was a protest against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction made it difficult for the vast majority of East London African youth to follow the Soweto route. Ebenezer Majombozi students were numerically and organisationally weak, as the best students in Duncan Village either studied in Mdantsane or Transkei. East London students had to rake up all kinds of excuses so as to be seen to be 'doing something'. It will be argued, though, that nothing effective came out of it.

Yet in this period, various influences would come together to mould an apparently unified and politicised African youth from previously disparate elements. The rise of a politically conscious youth in East London led to a re-definition of notions of youth. Old categories began to disappear, whilst new ones emerged. A new unifying concept, **qabane** (comrade), became central. The street youth culture of the past, dominated by the 'tsotsis', and school dropouts, was gradually being superceded by a politically inspired new youth culture. The new actors were drawn from various youth categories. It will be argued, though, that the intervention of the youth was not without problems. The political agenda of the politically organised youth was often not clear enough in terms of specific objectives and alternatives to the apartheid system. In making this criticism, a number of factors will, of course, be

taken into account. For example, both the South African state and the Ciskei administration ruthlessly responded to the rise and development of youth and worker organisation in the late 1970s.[1] The youth initiative itself was new and its actors inexperienced and easily manipulated. Further, there were deep divisions amongst the political youth.

The Emergence of a Political Youth in East London.

It has been said that, the Soweto uprisings caught East London students by surprise. However, this should not be interpreted to mean that there was no activity going on at all. Due to severe repression in the Border region, it was not easy to organise publicly. Activities took place underground. Andile, who was about 20 years at the time of the Soweto uprisings recalled:

> I became politically conscious around 1976, say in 1975. There was a Border youth organisation. I was aware of certain youth activities but did not participate in them. Joining the youth organisation required connections, it was exclusive, I suppose one was recruited.[2]

Peter, who was Andile's contemporary, was, by 1975, already involved in these youth activities. According to the former, he developed an interest in politics whilst he was still at Ebenezer Majombozi Secondary School in Duncan Village. He claimed that they were friends in the same class, "and we liked reading books, women and clothes."[3] Later on, according to him, they came to know about the existence of SASO at the University of Fort Hare, and about activities of "Saso people in Ginsberg."[4] Asked when exactly this was in relationship to the Soweto uprisings, he responded:

> "This started in 1975. Already we were aware of the mood that was increasingly gripping the country. We had a feeling that liberation was not far away. We were hearing a lot about Mozambique and Angola, and we drew inspiration from these struggles. We were not deterred by reports in government publications like **iNkqubela** which showed pictures of badly burnt people, claiming that they were

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1   See South African Labour Bulletin (Special Issue), 1982, Nos 4 & 5.
2   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
3   Interview with Peter 12/1/93.
4   Idem. Steve Biko's home was in Ginsberg, and he himself, as already cited, was banned to Ginsberg at the time.

victims of 'terrorists' (**abakrokrisi**). We saw this as propaganda against freedom fighters."[5]

Peter's involvement in politics by 1975 further manifested itself in the sense that, in his words, "towards the end of 1975, before the Soweto uprisings, I was detained and tortured."[6]

Most political activities, though, took place in Mdantsane and King William's Town, and very little was happening in Duncan Village. According to Andile, this was "particularly because Mdantsane was a dumping ground for former Robben Island prisoners."[7] Activities centred around recruiting people for military training (mainly by the ANC members)[8] and propagation of socialist ideas (mainly by an organisation calling itself the 'Front', an underground Marxist organisation which had study groups throughout South Africa[9]).

However, it is the Soweto uprisings that provided some space for mass political participation in South Africa, particularly in the 1980's. Despite the presence of the ANC and the 'Front', the dominant and visible influence in the period both before and immediately after the Soweto uprisings was undoubtedly the Black Consciousness Movement, organisationally represented in the East London and Border region by the Black People's Convention (BPC), Black Community Programmes (BCP) and the South African Students Organisation (SASO). The South African Students' Movement (SASM) never really had any foothold in East London and the Border region as such. It seems as if SASM had some presence in schools. For example, the five students in the Healdtown

5   Interview with Peter 12/1/93.
6   Idem. Detention and torture, by both the South African and Ciskei police was to be Peter's way of existence until 1990.
7   Interview with Peter 12/1/93.
8   See, for example, the case involving five students from the Healdtown Institution in Fort Beaufort in 1976, who were accused on four counts under the 'Terrorism Act' for allegedly attempting or planning "to leave the Republic during 1975, to undergo military training, and to have incited other to do the same." South African Institute of Race Relations Annual Survey, 1976 p 135.
9   See the case involving Mluleki George, Simon Mlonyeni and Phila Nkayi in Port Elizabeth in July 1978, Eastern Cape Herald, 20 July 1978, and also the 1976 case involving Dumisa Ntsebeza, Lungisile Ntsebeza, Godfrey Silinga, Matthew Goniwe and Michael Mgobozi, in Umtata, Transkei. With regard to the activities of this group in the Transvaal, see Diseko op. cit. p 59. Diseko erroneously refers to this group as the Unity Movement, possibly because of the 'non-Stalinist' line taken by the organisation.

Institution trial mentioned above were members of SASM. Although Hyslop[10] claims that SASM was active in the Eastern Cape, he does not furnish any evidence to substantiate his claim, and there was really no visible structure worth mentioning in East London in particular. The only visible students' organisation was SASO, which had a strong base in the region at the University of Fort Hare. There were no youth organisations for school leavers. The latter ended up establishing SASO branches.[11] According to Andile:

> In the mid-1970's, at the peak of Black Consciousness, students had a very strong organisational presence. I still remember that we formed a local SASO branch and, this is interesting, most of the people who formed this were not even university students, some of us were UNISA students, registered for one course or two. I was not working, doing a course with a correspondence college. But we were strong. We were informed by the environment, youth organisations were defunct. The emphasis was on student politics. This was possibly influenced by the nature of Black Consciousness itself, which, looking back tended to be elitist (**inokukhumsha okukhulu**). So even though we were not university students in the real sense of the word, we managed to get ourselves into SASO on the basis of being associate students. ..... We wanted an identity as students. We didn't form a youth organisation, though we recruited people who were not at university. SASM never had a stronghold in that area, we emerged as SASO.[12]

East London, though, had very few black university students, and students eligible for university study. The bulk of the students were in primary and high schools. In order to accommodate the latter group, given the fact that SASM was weak in the area, a new organisation, the East London Student Cultural Association (ELSCA), was established early in 1977. By August of the same year, ELSCA was stopped in its tracks through the detention of its leaders, after they attended the SASO conference. According to Andile:

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10   op. cit. p 186.
11   This seems to have been a feature of youth organisation during the 1970's to the early 1980's. SASM faced a similar situation where non-school based youth were members. According to Diseko, "most of them had left school pre-maturely and still hoped to go back. ..... In some of the cases these young people continued their education by correspondence through private colleges". Diseko op. cit. p 62. When COSAS was established in 1979, the same phenomenon repeated itself. See also Seekings (1993) Heroes or Villains? Youth politics in the 1980s (Johannesburg:Ravan Press).
12   Interview with Andile 5/11/90. For an interesting account of the South African Students' Movement, see Diseko op. cit. She does concede in her account that SASM was essentially a Transvaal based organisation.

"This organisation was dominated by us. Mzukisi Skweyiya in particular was, as a boxer, popular. ...... He organised people around boxing films and so on. One of the students who participated in ELSCA teased me recently saying that ELSCA executive was the same as the SASO executive. This was a blunder because it became easy for the 'boers' to crush the organisation. We were arrested about that time."[13]

Peter, who "left school in 1975, due to ill health", seems to have been active in the BPC. As members of the BPC, they interacted with members of the then banned ANC and PAC, for example, Zolile Keke, who was a PAC member. According to Peter, it was "convenient for them to work with BPC, as the latter was not banned."[14]

Apart from the above political organisation which arose after the Soweto uprisings, and which seems to have impacted on a few people, the death in detention of Steve Biko in 1977, and the publicity it received, particularly in the local newspaper, the Daily Dispatch, which was edited by Donald Woods, a friend of Steve Biko, marked an important turning point in politicising the youth in the Border region as such. Further, this particular event did a lot to promote the cause of the Black Consciousness Movement as such in the region. Mcebisi, who was born in Transkei in 1961, and who came to East London to study in 1978, when he was 17 years old, had this to say about the dominance of the Black Consciousness Movement amongst students:

"I mixed with youth of my age, and this was at the time immediately after the death of Steve (Biko), in 1977. The latter was in the lips of the youth, although some of these things were uttered in whispering tones. Even newspapers, which I had developed an attitude to read, had a lot to say about the death of Steve. I was received by students, by youth that was dominated by the Black Consciousness Movement, so to speak. This was the case for all youth, those at school and those who were not schooling. Black Consciousness was dominant. There are people, now associated with the ANC, who were known to be propagators of BC (Black Consciousness).[15]

When Mcebisi arrived in East London in 1978, organisations associated with the Black Consciousness Movement were banned in October 1977, hence his claim that "some of

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13   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
14   Interview with Peter 12/1/93.
15   Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.

these things were uttered in whispering tones". What is more, the South African state, together with their Ciskei collaborators, were harassing political opposition. In fact, some interpreted the clampdown to mark a successful suppression of political resistance, reminiscent of the crackdown in the early 1960's. According to Johnson, by 1978, "children were back at school, and the momentum of the youth-led revival of resistance was, quite literally, arrested."[16] Molteno in his review of the 16 June 1976 literature cautiously concluded: "Although the struggles of that year are not over and cannot be, the uprising is past."[17] The dominance of Black Consciousness as a result of the publicity surrounding the death in detention of Steve Biko, should thus be seen against the above background. Further, it should be noted that there was hardly any political and organisational expression of the Black Consciousness Movement during this time in East London. The majority of its leaders were either detained, banned or forced to leave the country. Recalling the form politics took amongst students, Mcebisi declared:

"We associated ourselves with BC, we were not really interested in issues of membership. We subscribed because we wanted to be liberated and come to power. It was rare to be organised for discussions. After some time I noticed that there were discussions taking place. People were first of all scrutinised. Some were involved in programmes, whilst others, like us, were followers, who were told what to do. We were ready to follow such instructions. Although there was this engine directing operations, it was not easy to identify it, but you could see that things were not spontaneous, we used to be told about certain meetings where positions would be stated.... Before the early 1980s, we could not point out any of our leaders ,.... they couldn't operate freely, due to repression, both by the South African state (**amabhulu**) and Ciskei."[18]

In other words, when Black Consciousness ultimately impacted on secondary school students in the late 1970's in the Border region, it was more in the form of an influence which lacked any organisational expression. Having said that, it must be said that the political lull following the crackdown in 1977 proved to be of short duration. Once again, students were central in the revival of political activity. At the same time, a key feature of

16   Johnson S (1988). 'The Soldiers of Luthuli': Youth in the Politics of Resistance in South Africa. In Johnson S (ed) <u>South Africa: No Turning Back</u>. (London:MacMillan), p 104.
17   Molteno F (1979). The Uprising of 16th June: A Review of the Literature on Events in South Africa 1976. In <u>Social Dynamics</u>, Vol 5, No 1, June, p 54.
18   Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.

the revival of political activity was the re-emergence of the Charterist tradition of the Congress Movement as the dominant tendency, outstripping the Black Consciousness tradition which dominated South Africa's political life from the late 1960's. An attempt will be made below to explain this turn of events.

The formation of COSAS and the emergence of Charterist/Congress tradition.

In June 1979, the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) was formed, effectively filling in the gap left open by the banning of SASM. The choice of the word 'Congress' was significant, and in many ways marked an open attempt by COSAS to identify with Congress Movement. In his address, the president, Elp Mogale, "described the organisation as one that was new and which had nothing to do with previous student bodies."[19] According to Johnson, the "guiding principle of the new organisation was that the ANC was the 'authentic liberation movement' of South Africa, and that the youth militants should plan their activities as a continuation of that tradition."[20]. The question must arise why there was this change from Black Consciousness to Charterism, particularly given the fact that the COSAS convenors were products of the Black Consciousness period.[21]

Firstly, already at the height of Black Consciousness, in the mid-1970's, some members within the tradition were becoming critical of its philosophy. According to Diseko, four aspects of Black Consciousness were subjected to major criticism: its economic policy; the role of white people in the struggle; its programme of action; and the question of armed struggle.[22] It is the latter, it seems, that received wider discussion, particularly within SASM. The non-violent policy of the Black Consciousness Movement was seen as unrealistic against a repressive and violent state. The death in exile of an influential leader, Onkgopotse Tiro, in 1974 reinforced this notion, as it was suspected that the letter bomb that killed him was sent by the South African intelligence.[23] Further, the fall of the Portugese colonies of Angola and Mozambique to the liberation movements, and the accelaration of the armed struggle in Zimbabwe offered further evidence to justify the armed struggle in South Africa.

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19   South African Institute of Race Relations Annual Survey, 1979, p 501.
20   Johnson op. cit. p 106. Similar views are held by Bot M (1985). School Boycotts 1984: The Crisis in African Education. In Indicator Project (Durban:University of Natal), p 16; Chisholm L (1986). :15 & Hyslop (1988) op. cit. p 188, among others.
21   Johnson op. cit. p 106.
22   Diseko op. cit. p 60.
23   Idem.

Secondly, by the mid-1970's, a number of ANC members who were imprisoned on Robben Island had been released. Some attempted to establish links with the Black Consciousness movement, particularly SASM. According to Diseko, "by 1976, with the release from Robben Island of major ANC activists, like Joe Gqabi, who were good organisers," the relationship between the ANC and SASM became more structured.[24] At the time, the policy of the ANC was geared towards the promotion of their version of the armed struggle.[25] In the same year, Joe Slovo, an influential figure in the Congress Alliance, published an essay, South Africa - No Middle Road, in which he argued that the only road was a left wing revolutionary road based on armed liberation struggle and leading to socialist revolution (instead of taking the middle road of peaceful pressure to achieve only national liberation).[26] The ANC activities thus focussed on recruiting for military training.[27] As Diseko points out, the police crackdown on SASM in 1975 and 1976, and the flight into exile by its members, offers sufficient evidence of the strengthening relationship between the two organisations. This relationship was perhaps sealed when, following the Soweto uprisings, and the subsequent flight into exile of large numbers of young South Africans in order to get military training, it was found that of all South African liberation movements in exile, the ANC was undoubtedly the best organised in terms of facilities for military training. As early as 1977, some young people belonging to the Black Consciousness period were returning to South Africa, now as members of the Congress Movement, and thus making it possible for the ANC to strengthen communication links internally.[28]

Thirdly, at the time of the establishment of COSAS in 1979, the ANC itself was revising its policy regarding their strategies. The strategic review was undertaken in 1978-79. Before the review, the ANC strategy "tended to centre on the development of a popular armed struggle for the seizure of state power in South Africa. .... the ANC had behaved as if armed activity was the major means to develop an organised political base".[29] The 1976

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24   Ibid. p 61.
25   Barrell H (1992). The Turn to the Masses: the African National Congress' Strategic Review of 1978-79. In Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol 18, No 1, March.
26   Harris L (1993). South Africa's Economic and Social Transformation: from 'No Middle Road' to 'No Alternative'. In Review of African Political Economy, No 57, pp 91-102.
27   Most of the trials during this period were in terms of the so-called Terrorism Act, and the charges were based on attempts to leave the country for military training. The Healdtown Institution cases mentioned above is a typical case in point.
28   Hyslop (1988) op. cit. p 187; Lodge (1983) op. cit. p 339.
29   Barrell op. cit. p 65.

Soweto uprisings compelled the ANC to review their strategy. In 1979, the review "concluded the main means should rather be **political organisation by political means -** legal, semi-legal and underground."[30] This, though, should not be interpreted to mean that the armed struggle was abandoned.

Fourthly, there seems to have always existed an ambiguity concerning the political status of the Black Consciousness Movement vis-a-vis the ANC and PAC. Some viewed the former as filling in a political vacuum, given that the latter organisations were banned. Black Consciousness in this sense was merely a stop-gap mechanism, and not a political organisation existing in its own right. Where the view held that the Black Consciousness Movement existed as a political movement, it was in so far as it was trying to bring the two organisations (ANC and PAC) together. Consequently, it was possible to find members and/ or supporters of Black Consciousness being supportive of either the ANC or PAC, or both. Peter, who was a BPC member, stressed:

> "What was often stressed when we were told about the Black People's Convention, for example, was that BPC was not a political organisation. It was explained that the main task of it was to raise the political consciousness of people. Further, its main objective was to bring the various political organisations like the ANC and PAC together, given the fact that they were fighting the same enemy."[31]

Mcebisi, who was never a member of any of the above organisations, observed:

> "What I noticed, say during the BC days, was that they would be arrested either with ANC or PAC material in their possession. There were none of the strong divisions between the two organisations, one never differentiated between slogans, you shouted all slogans."[32]

However, by the late 1970's, it was clear that Black Consciousness, organisationally represented by the Azanian People's Organisation (formed in 1978), was presenting itself

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30 Idem.
31 Interview with Peter 12/1/93.
32 Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91. Johnson aptly puts the matter in these terms: "Indeed, in so far as the children of Soweto had been aware of the history of black resistance, the names of Luthuli and Mandela of the ANC were invoked along with those of Sobukwe of the PAC, and Lembede, one of the spiritual 'fathers' of Africanism." Johnson op. cit. p 105.

as an independent tendency from the Charterist tradition. For example, in November 1979, a new students' organisation, the Azanian Students' Organisation (AZASO), made up of university students sympathetic to Black Consciousness, was launched.[33]

Finally, by 1979, as will be discussed below, a Trade Union tradition, built along non-racial lines, and putting the discussion of socialism high on the agenda, was entrenching itself and posing a serious threat to Black Consciousness and its black exclusivism and vague economic programmes.[34] In the case of East London, the most powerful union was the South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU), whose origins can be traced to a split in the Black Allied Workers Union (BAWU) "between those who supported ... the black consciousness philosophy and those who ..... favoured non-racialism."[35] As we shall see, SAAWU was very influential in the East London black community, including students and the youth as such. This was in stark contrast to the Black Consciousness movement, which, despite the fact that they were involved in community projects through the Black Community Programmes (BCP), "never really rooted itself firmly amongst the masses and failed to adequately organise the active working class into mass action."[36] In other words, Black Consciousness appealed and attracted a few petty bourgeois intellectuals and students, whilst SAAWU addressed the needs and interests of workers and the wider community.

The above factors must, at least, be taken into account in explaining the shift away from Black Consciousness to the Charterist tradition from the late 1970's. The process, though, was gradual and uneven. The East London branch of COSAS provides a good example of this gradual and uneven process.

The formation of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) in East London provided an opportunity, perhaps for the first time, for East London students to find an organisational expression for their views, and to play leadership roles. According to Mcebisi:

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33   Johnson op. cit. p 106.
34   See Jack AN (1985). The 1983-4 East London Bus Boycott: Union and Community - Political Action. Unpublished Bachelor of Social Science Honours Thesis (Grahamstown:Rhodes University).
35   Maree J (1982). SAAWU in the East London Area: 1979-1981. In South African Labour Bulletin, Vol 7, Nos 4 & 5, February, p 35.
36   Jack op. cit. p 26.

"During the BC days, we were juniors.[37] After the formation of COSAS, we found an opportunity to be in leadership positions.[38]

It is not clear when COSAS was formed in East London. At the founding conference in 1979, for example, East London was not represented.[39] It seems as if it is only in the early 1980's that the organisation was formed. Mcebisi only talks about his own active involvement, which was in 1983.[40] Whatever the exact date, what seems evident is that COSAS came late in East London.

Further, in terms of its political orientation, COSAS was seen, at least by Mcebisi, as "an extension of the BC struggles. So much so that, for a while, COSAS depended on the SASM (South African Students' Movement) material. I don't know what the position was in other areas."[41] Yet, in terms of the founder members of COSAS, there was a clear identification with the ANC. COSAS (presumably in the Transvaal), for instance, "aggressively promoted" the 'Free Mandela' campaign in 1980.[42] From Mcebisi's account of Black Consciousness, there does not seem to have been any coherent understanding of it. All they picked up in Black Consciousness was its revulsion against Bantu Education. He is open-minded and introspective about their COSAS activities.

"We moved into COSAS with the 1976 ideology against Bantu Education, without any sophistication. We were convinced that we could destroy Bantu Education. The emphasis was more on crushing Bantu Education, with a strong BC influence that Bantu Education made us slaves. Tiro's teachings were very influential."[43]

It must be pointed out that students were not a homogeneous grouping. Some (perhaps a minority) were actively involved in politics, others actively against politics, whilst others were not interested at all. According to Mcebisi:

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37 Also, as has been indicated above, when Mcebisi came to East London, Black Consciousness movements were banned, and when AZAPO was formed in 1978, it never had any visibility in East London.
38 Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.
39 For a list of regions that attended see South African Institute of Race Relations Annual Survey, 1979 p 500.
40 Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91. What seems clear is that COSAS was in existence in 1981. For example, as will be seen below, COSAS participated in the 1981 Anti-Republic festival campaign.
41 Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.
42 Johnson op. cit. p 106.
43 Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.

"Youth that was not interested in politics usually went to drink liqour,.... and return to the meeting to cause trouble. They were identified as trouble makers. Others were identified as not interested in politics at all. Those completing their studies looked down upon those in lower classes.[44]

To conclude this section: The influence of Black Consciousness on the East London branch of COSAS, or put differently, openly identifying with Black Consciousness was shortlived. As was the case with the 1976 Soweto students, COSAS did not restrict itself to student affairs only. It opened up to the organised working class, particualrly the South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU), and the broader community. The alliance with SAAWU, and the influence of former Robben Island prisoners belonging to the Congress Tradition,[45] were decisive in swinging the balance in favour of the Charterist tradition amongst students, and the youth as such.

The Worker/Student Alliance

At the same time as students were organising themselves around their issues, East London workers were also building their own trade unions. The most powerful union in East London, as already stated, was SAAWU, which was established in March 1979 in Durban.[46] East London was represented by Thozamile Gqwetha, who was BAWU national organiser in East London.[47] It is no exaggeration to say that the establishment of SAAWU in East London was indeed a momentous event. The latter's influence and presence spread far and wide in the entire Border region. Whilst primarily addressing itself to trade union or worker issues, it had an influence on students and the youth as such.[48] As Mcebisi observed:

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44   Idem. Almost all the interviewees agreed, though, that in times of school boycotts, virtually all students would boycott classes. There are all kinds of reasons why students respond to boycott calls, ranging from peer group pressure to being happy not to go to school.

45   Some of these prisoners grew up in the Black Consciousness tradition, but returned from prison as adherents of the Charterist tradition.

46   The other unions were the General Workers' Union (GWU) and the African Food and Canning Workers' Union (AFCWU).

47   For an account of SAAWU in East London during its first three years of existence, see Maree op. cit.

48   It is important to note that while students and the youth as such might have been visible in the alliance, they were clearly not leading the alliance. SAAWU was clearly dominant.

"In the early 1980's, in terms of workers, there was a strong trade union, not only in East London, it had organised as far afield as Dimbaza, the South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU). It had an influence even amongst students because it had a claim that students were their children."[49]

The impact of the alliance between SAAWU and students was such that it altered the students' original notion that Bantu Education would "be destroyed by uniting all students in South Africa."[50] This development was further made possible by the fact that some of the students who completed their studies were absorbed by the job market. Some of them, who were involved in student politics during their student days, joined the labour movement, whilst retaining links with their student friends. Although the membership of SAAWU was not entirely made up of young people, its leadership was young, being people in their mid-twenties. The president and vice president of SAAWU, Thozamile Gqwetha and Sisa Njikelana, respectively were in their mid twenties, "without any former trade union experience when the union commenced."[51]

Students were involved in a number of activities and campaigns that involved both the unions and the wider community. In East London, they were involved in the 1981 nationwide consumer boycott against the British-owned Wilson Rowntree company following a labour dispute involving members of SAAWU.[52] In the same year, students, together with teachers, representatives of trade unions and the United Women's Organisation, made a call for the release of Nelson Mandela, at the launch of a Border Civic Organisation.[53]

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49 Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91. This was not the first time that a trade union tackled issues beyond the point of production in East London. In the 1930's, the Independent Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (IICU) of Clements Kadalie adopted a similar approach. In this regard see Beinart W and Bundy C (1987). Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa (Johannesburg:Ravan Press). The independence of the Ciskei, though, was a crucial factor in the overtly political direction that SAAWU took in the early 1980's. The majority of East London workers live in Mdantsane, Ciskei. With the independence of Ciskei, these workers would lose their South African citizenship, hence SAAWU's demands for, inter alia, the abolition of pass laws. See Maree op. cit. and Jack op. cit.

50 Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.

51 Maree op. cit. p 48.

52 Naidoo K (1988). Internal Resistance in South Africa: The Political Movements. In Johnson S (ed) South Africa: No Turning Back (London:MacMillan), p 173.

53 Daily Dispatch 20 July 1981.

During the 1983-84 bus boycott in East London,[54] students played a visible role. COSAS was represented in the Committee of ten, formed in 1983 to represent commutters boycotting the bus service in East London.[55] According to Andile:

"Students within the sphere of COSAS had a strong presence in East London, they were very strong and militant. For example, one of their members ended up in the Committee of Ten. The participation of students was so visible during the bus boycott, there was no way that they could be overlooked. These are the people who had a visible organisational strength."[56]

Apart from the above, SAAWU became a source for reading material for COSAS members, further enhancing their influence on the latter.[57]

The Formation of Youth Movements in East London: 1982 - 1985.

By 1982, there were two major organisations in East London, namely, SAAWU and COSAS. Despite the claims of SAAWU that students' and youth struggles were theirs, as parents, and the fact that they provided students and the youth with reading material, SAAWU was above all a trade union, concerned primarily with trade union and worker issues.[58] Similarly, by this time, COSAS, in terms of the issues they were tackling, focussed on students. In 1980, a new wave of students' boycotts started, this time by Coloured schools in the Western Cape, and spreading to Indian and African areas.[59] The new wave "threw up a new generation of leadership in COSAS, and emphasised the importance of engaging with school students over school-based grievances."[60] At the same time, by 1982, the South African economy in general was not in a position to absorb the fast growing number of school leavers, including students who were excluded and continued to be excluded from schools because of their students' political involvement.[61] Theoretically,

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54 For details of the bus boycott, see Jack op. cit. and Swilling M (1984). "The Buses Smell of Blood": The East London Boycott. In South African Labour Bulletin Vol 9, No 5, March.
55 See Jack op. cit.
56 Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
57 Interview with Mcebisi 4/1/91.
58 From its inception, but particularly in 1980 and 1981, SAAWU was involved in a series of strike actions over wages, conditions of service and recognition agreements.
59 See Johnson op. cit. p 108.
60 Seekings (1993) op. cit. p 33.
61 For example, in order to curb student activism after 1976, a prohibition from attending school was imposed on students over 18 in standard eight and over 20 in standard ten. (Chisholm 1986:16).

those students could not be members of COSAS, a students' organisation. Yet they suffered for the student cause. When COSAS was established, they remained in or joined COSAS. In other words, up to 1982, the membership of COSAS was made up of not only current students, but also excluded students and school leavers who were unemployed,[62] and thus could not be members of trade unions. The nature of COSAS at its inception, in that it tended to tackle political issues like the release Mandela and the Anti-Republic festival campaigns, made this possible. Problems arose for school leavers in the aftermath of the 1980 school boycotts when focus was increasingly on student specific issues, like the Students' Representative Councils, for example. A new structure to accommodate the out of school and out of work youth became a necessity.

The response of COSAS was to issue a clarion call, at a national conference convened in 1982, for the establishment of youth organisations.[63] Some East London student leaders attended the COSAS conference that came to the above decision. On their return, they set in motion a process which culminated in the establishment of the East London Youth Organisation in 1982. A feature of the youth structures, including the East London Youth Organisation, was that they accommodated young people from various categories. The East London Youth Organisation was thus the first successful attempt to bring together East London youth from different categories, namely students, young workers and the unemployed youth. Hitherto, there was no single organisation addressing the aspirations and interests of the youth as such, be it student, worker and unemployed. According to Chops:

> "In 1982, the first East London youth body was formed, the East London Youth Organisation. Its membership was made up of people who were also members of SAAWU."[64]

The East London youth immediately redefined its political boundaries, and refused to accept the boundaries of East London as defined by the state. In terms of its sphere of operations, East London was defined to include Mdantsane. Further, the establishment of

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62 For an interesting account of this situation, see Seekings (1993) op. cit., especially pp 20-35.

63 Johnson op. cit. p 109; Seekings (1993) op. cit. Other youth structures other than COSAS seem to have identified a similar problem. According to Mcebisi, "a lot of youth bodies were formed, like the Azanian Youth Unity (AZANYU)". (Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91).

64 Interview with Chops 20/12/91. Chisholm (1986) and Swilling (1986), suggest, though, that it is the unemployed that swelled the base for the youth congresses.

the East London Youth Organisation marked a decisive political break with the Black Consciousness Movement and its influence on the youth, in favour of the Congress Movement which mobilised around the 1955 Freedom Charter. By this time, nationally, there was a spectacular revival of the Congress Movement, which began to manifest itself in the form of the Release Mandela campaign in 1980 and the anti-Republic Day celebrations of 1981. Despite the formation of the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), the Black Consciousness Movement never really recovered after it was banned in 1977. Some of its leading members joined the Congress Movement.[65]

The Youth Organisation could not develop into a strong and disciplined political organisation. At least two factors will be highlighted here, namely, political repression and divisions amongst the political youth. It will be suggested that the latter, namely, divisions amongst the political youth, was orchestrated by former Robben Island prisoners.

It became increasingly difficult, due to repression, for the Youth Organisation to conduct political education amongst its members, something that is so central and crucial in building an effective and solid political organisation. The ANC, which inspired the youth was a banned organisation, making it illegal to get and freely disseminate its literature. The South African state and Ciskei, were quite severe in their repression of political opposition. Recalling those days, and difficulties experienced in acquiring literature, Chops reminisced:

> "Because organisations were banned, political education was done secretly, in small group discussions. Even then it was seldom for such discussions to take place due to repression. It was difficult to get literature from outside, you had to hide it. If and when one found it, it would be after some time, with missing pages, unclear print because tea or coffee might have spilt over it or had been rained over."[66]

The literature that was read was clearly drawn from the ANC and SACP publications:

> "We read things like 'Umsebenzi', 'Sechaba', the Freedom Charter and so on. As I say we did not receive it regularly and in some cases incomplete. With time, the

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65   See also Naidoo op. cit., for an explanation of this transition. According to him, some of the "former BC luminaries spent many year with leading members of the ANC on Robben Island ..... where there was much discussion and debate." Naidoo op. cit. p 177.

66   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.

Freedom Charter was available in fair quantities."[67]

Mcebisi, however, suggests that there was a lot of material available. According to him, papers were prepared, underground, by the former Robben Island prisoners and photocopied. They "used to simplify certain topics, in about three pages."[68]

Political education thus seems to have been hampered by severe political conditions. Where it did take place, there is very little evidence to suggest that it was systematic and methodical, for example, setting up study groups and having discussions and debates on the issues at stake. The reading of the material was rather superficial. According to Mcebisi:

"The problem is that these documents were produced in leaflet form. As a result, they were read and gone. You had to read and pass on to others."[69]

What these leaflets seemed to have achieved was to equip those who read them with slogans, as opposed to what lay behind them, leading to all kinds of divisions amongst the political youth. Mcebisi observed that:

"It was on the basis of this reading that people started attacking and categorising each other as 'narrow', 'ultra', 'populist', 'workerist'. People used to read these pamphlets and leaflets."[70]

As regards political divisions: In 1983, another youth organisation, the East London Youth Congress was formed, ostensibly because of the detention of members of the East London Youth Organisation in 1983. In that year, there was a major bus boycott in East London. A number of people were detained. Others "felt they could not endure the pressure and decided to flee to foreign countries."[71] Leading members of the East London Youth Organisation were amongst those who were either detained or left the country. It is during this period of their absence that the East London Youth Congress was formed. It should be noted that it did not replace the Youth Organisation, but existed as an organisation in its own right.

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67   Idem. The Freedom Charter was unbanned in 1984, which explains why it was "available in fair quantities."
68   Interview with Mcebisi 4/1/92.
69   Idem.
70   Idem.
71   Idem.

According to Mcebisi, the formation of the East London Youth Congress was the result of a power struggle which was orchestrated by former Robben Island prisoners. The divisions were a manifestation of divisions on Robben Island between those Congress members who were labelled 'narrow nationalists', because they were not supportive of communism, and ANC members who were also members of the South African Communist Party. In his words:

"It became clear that there was a power struggle of some sorts. The source of this power struggle was traced to differences of former Robben Islanders. It became clear that the youth was used to express differences on the Island, for example, people were dubbing others 'narrow nationalists', 'marxists'. You could hear the language amongst the youth. You'd hear terms like **umgwenya** (an ordinary follower), as opposed to a politically sophisticated 'organic' intellectual (**onephepha**).[72]

As if that was not enough, yet another youth organisation was formed in 1984 by the youth of Duncan Village. According to Chops:

"In 1984, we formed our own youth organisation here in Duncan Village, called Duncan Village Youth Movement. Most meetings were held here due to harassment by the Ciskei administration. That was the birth of youth organisations."[73]

All the above youth organisations affiliated to the United Democratic Front (UDF) when it was formed in 1983. All accepted and endorsed the Freedom Charter. In other words, these divisions amongst these various youth organisations were not based on their rejection or acceptance of the Freedom Charter, for example, as would be the case with Black Consciousness or Africanist inclined youth. It is clear that the division were internal.

"The two youth organisations, the East London Youth Organisation and the Youth Congress affiliated to the UDF. The Duncan Village Youth Movement was accountable to the Duncan Village Youth Association which was formed in 1984. The Duncan Village Youth Movement was also affiliated to the UDF."[74]

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72   Idem.
73   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
74   Idem.

What was the root cause of the divisions amongst Robben Island prisoners, divisions that spilled over to the youth organisations? Mcebisi, as we have seen, thinks that it was power struggles within the Congress movement. Whilst this might well have been the case, it is possible to put forward another explanation.

The rise of the trade union movement, in the late 1970's and early 1980's, and the revitilisation of the ANC in the early to mid 1980's, put high on the agenda the question of an alternative(s) to apartheid, with particular reference to the future of socialism in South Africa. The question was made all the more urgent if viewed against the background of attempts by both the state and capital to 'reform' apartheid from above. A lot of attention was focussed on the ANC for the simple reason that it was the most popular liberation movement at the time. The responses of the trade union movement and the ANC to the above were by and large influenced by their conceptualisation of the character and nature of the South African struggle. A feature of the South African system in the twentieth century was that capitalist development took place under conditions of racial oppression. This has made some analysts in the left to conclude that the struggle in South Africa is a dual struggle against racial oppression and capitalist exploitation, in short, a struggle against 'racial capitalism'.[75]

The big question facing the Congress movement as such has been: "How to overthrow the structures of racial oppression .... while position oneself favourably to win the struggle against capitalist exploitation ...."[76] In a nutshell, the debate boils down to the question of ensuring that the revolution culminates into a socialist direction, and does not become a 'bourgeois democratic revolution'.

The Congress movement characterised the South African situation as 'colonialism of a special type'. From this theory, the political strategy of a 'two-stage revolution' emerged. Central to this thesis is a rejection of the 'permanent revolution' thesis, in terms of which the political and the class struggle are rolled into one:

> "The reality is that the chief content of the present phase of our revolution is the
> national liberation of black people. It is actually impossible for South Africa to

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75 Saul J (1988). Class, Race and the Future of Socialism. In Cobbett W & Cohen R (eds) Popular Struggles in South Africa (London:James Currey), p 215.

76 Ibid., pp 214-5.

advance to socialism before the national liberation of the black oppressed nation ....
(To) proceed and say that the same nationalist struggle is also socialist in content is
to make real confusion."[77]

Further, it is accepted that the ANC leads the first phase of the struggle. With regard to
the position of the ANC vis-a-vis socialism, the position was made explicit by Thabo Mbeki:

> The ANC is not a socialist party. It has never pretended to be one, it has never said
> it was, and it is not trying to be. It will not become one by decree or for the purpose
> of pleasing its "left" critics.'[78]

From the above formulations, it is understandable why socialists both inside and outside
the Congress tradition are uncomfortable about the prospects of socialism under the
leadership of the ANC. Too much emphasis is put on the first phase, namely, the national
bourgeois democratic revolution and very little is said about the transition from national
democracy to socialism. Slovo dismissed a rigid two-stage model, arguing that the
"'dominant ingredient of later stages must have already begun to mature within the womb
of the earlier stage' and that in South Africa there is indeed a certain simultaneity to the
struggles 'for social as well as national emancipation.' Moreover, the 'most important'
determinant of whether the revolutions will move toward the 'true liberation' which
socialism represents is precisely the 'role played by the working class in the alliance of class
forces during the first stage of the continuing revolutions'."[79]

In other words, two broad positions were evident in the Congress Alliance, namely, those
who give weight to the political struggle against racial oppression, and probably not
interested in a socialist revolution, on the one hand, and socialists who want to ensure that
after national democracy, the process will move on to socialism.

At the same time as the future of socialism was discussed within the Congress Alliance, the
same issue was receiving the attention of the trade union movement that emerged in the
1970's quite independent of the Congress movement. As early as 1981, Joe Foster, General
Secretary of FOSATU, cast suspicion to the relationship between political movements and
working class organisations, fearing that "the interests of the working class could be

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77 Mzala (1985), quoted from Saul op. cit. p 216.
78 Quoted from Saul op. cit. p 217.
79 Quoted from Saul op. cit. p 217.

subsumed by the national democratic struggle."[80] According to him, "'political movements are often controlled by the "petty bourgeoisie" who fear genuine worker-controlled trade unions. They strive to dissolve worker-controlled movements into a mass political movement dominated not by workers, but by the "petty bourgeoisie".[81] Erwin, at the time in FOSATU, drew a distinction between "the 'politics of liberation' - ever 'in danger of cooptation' - and the more radical politics of 'transformation'" and "stressed the necessity for workers to begin 'building tomorrow today'".[82]

It needs to be pointed out, though, that FOSATU's position was not a general trade union view. There was another position within the trade union movement, which tended to favour the broad 'politics of liberation', rather than emphasising the specific interests of the workers. The latter position was powerfully represented in the early 1980s by SAAWU. This was particularly the case in East London.

The above debates, within the Congress Alliance and between some trade unionists and the Congress movement, were not often given the attention and seriousness they deserved.[83] Too often, the debates degenerated into slogans. For example, those within the Congress Alliance who tended to emphasise the national revolution, while paying lip service to the socialist revolution were dubbed 'narrow nationalists'. Former Robben Island prisoners throughout South Africa often point out tensions on the island between followers of Mandela, labelled narrow nationalists, and those of Harry Gwala who propagated an ultimate communist revolution in South Africa. On the other hand, the debate involving trade unionists degenerated into a mud-slinging, those calling for a working class led organisation, FOSATU unions in particular, being labelled 'economists' or 'workerists' by those in political movements, and the latter, led by SAAWU, being criticised as 'populists'.[84]

What was the position in East London? Detailed research on the politics of East London as such still has to be done. This is an important project which, whilst it has implications

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80 Van Niekerk P (1988). The Trade Union Movement in the Politics of Resistance in South Africa. In Johnson S (ed) <u>South Africa: No Turning Back</u> (London:MacMillan), p 155.
81 Quoted from Saul op. cit. p 222.
82 Idem.
83 Some academics were drawn into these debates, and at this level, interesting insights emerged. It is unfortunate that such debates and discussions could not trickle down to the grass-roots, including the youth.
84 Saul op. cit. and Van Niekerk op. cit.

for this study, unfortunately falls outside its scope, and thus cannot be embarked upon here. What can be said in this study is that the ANC was quite active in East London. According to Peter:

> "There was a lot of underground activity conducted by the ANC. Some of us were involved in such activities. The 'boers' tortured us because they wanted information about these underground activities. .... In some cases, they persuaded us to work for them as informers."[85]

Further, there were/are various influences which together made/make up the politics of the area, and therefore the politics of the youth.[86] Firstly, there was the 'outside' influence, brought to East London by those who left the country in the mid-1970s, and who by the early 1980s were returning in secret to conduct 'operations' inside the country.[87] Research needs to done about the kinds of politics, as distinct from military training, they were exposed to in exile to understand what they brought back with them. Secondly, ANC stalwarts like Oscar Mpetha did a lot of spade work in the process of establishing a trade union tradition in East London in the 1970s.[88] Thirdly, there was the influence of former Robben Island prisoners, most of whom were released to Mdantsane and Dimbaza in the Ciskei from as early as the mid-1960s. It is quite clear from conversations with some of them that they clearly divide between 'nationalists', supporting only the national struggle that the ANC is engaged in, and 'communists', propagating a communist revolution as a follow up to the national revolution. The former claim to be supporters of Mandela, while the latter claim to be supporters of Gwala and Govan Mbeki (Oom Gov). Lastly, but not least, East London is a traditional stronghold of the ANC and populism in its trade unionism.[89] Once again, detailed research needs to be done on the nature and style of politics in East London, and how the youth understood things.

However, what seems possible to say, particularly in the light of the above testimony by Mcebisi, is that, it is the slogans, rather than the issues raised in the various debates that caught the imagination of the youth.[90] We have seen above that in the case of East

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85 Interview with Peter 12/1/93.
86 I am grateful to Mike Morris for drawing my attention to some of these influences.
87 Interview with Peter 12/1/93.
88 This was brought to my attention by Mike Morris.
89 See Beinart W & Bundy C (1987) op. cit.; and Jack op. cit.
90 For an account of similar tension in the Alexander township, see Carter C (1991). 'We are the Progressives': Alexandra Youth Congress Activists and the Freedom Charter, 1983-85. In Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol 17, No 2, June.

London, a number of Charterist youth organisations emerged. The existence of so many youth organisations in a small place like East London, and Duncan Village in particular was not without its problems. Chops openly admits that:

"The existence of these various youth bodies led to all sorts of tensions in this region, affecting the development of the East London youth as such. Later on, it had a criminal element involvement. There was no proper political education."[91]

It must be pointed out that these tensions arose, not because there were differences as such, but primarily because of the manner in which differences were handled. Differences do not necessarily affect development. In fact, differences, it is argued, depending on how they are handled, can and do lead to development. The latter becomes a possibility if people are allowed to differ, to freely express their opinions, to criticise, and be criticised. In such a situation, one learns by having one's mistakes pointed out and by subsequently rectifying such mistakes. However, this was unfortunately not the case in South Africa as such during this period. Referring to the Youth Congress, Andile had this to say:

"I found that when they discussed, there was an element of rudeness, insulting other people, and so on. After their meetings, they would go to the Youth League meetings and disrupt them. There was that organisational rivalry which was not based on an ideology."[92]

Chops indicated that the Duncan Village Youth Movement was formed in order that the Duncan Village youth should distance itself from the tensions and acrimonies of the Youth Organisation and the Youth Congress. On a sombre note, Mcebisi observed that a number of hard working youth were lost to the youth cause due to these divisions.

"There emerged a group that argued that for as long as there were divisions, they would not join any organisation. Such people were not involved in any political and youth activities as a result, and this was a very active youth. Some joined other youth movements saying that they wanted to be involved where there were no rifts.[93]

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91   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
92   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
93   Interview with Mcebisi 4/1/92.

To sum up this section: The period 1982-85 marked, arguably for the first time in the history of East London, the birth of youth movements. But, as Johnson observed, "the organisational expansion marked the formalisation of differing and potentially hostile political tendencies within the youth component."[94] On the eve of the 1985 uprisings in Duncan Village, the political youth of East London was weakened by all kinds of divisions. However, it should be pointed out that political repression which applied equally to members of all the various youth organisation made the divisions less conspicuous. They all faced the same 'enemy', so to speak. But at times divisions were such that even during campaigns, there would be clashes. For example, during the bus boycott in 1983, the Youth Congress was criticised for its support of the boycott. According to Mcebisi, they "were labelled unruly, dagga smokers and thinking they knew politics."[95]

COSAS and Students as such, 1982-85.

The establishment of youth organisations from 1982 did not affect the existence of COSAS as an independent organisation. Instead, some COSAS members held dual membership.[96] As we have seen above, COSAS, and students as such became central in the political and social life of South Africa. This was the case even in Duncan Village. The latter's position was further strengthened by the state's decision not to disestablish Duncan Village. This was in line with the Riekert Commissions recommendations on influx control regulations, among others, which divided Africans in urban areas between permanent residents (insiders) and migrants (outsiders). By 1982, there were two high schools and seven primary schools in Duncan Village. Some Duncan Village students continued to study in Mdantsane, other parts of Ciskei and Transkei. What this meant is that by the early 1980's, there was a noticeable growth of students at high school level. As Andile points out:

"There used .... to be an element of students who, for example, studied at Welsh High School, Lovedale, Healdtown. They formed a layer of 'senior school people' (abantu basesinaleni), distinct from those in the location. .... (They) used to be conceited. ..... But during our time, this layer is weak, largely because high school education is accessible to a number of people. .... As a result that clout lost its sting."[97]

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94   Johnson op. cit. p 112.
95   Interview with Mcebisi 4/1/92.
96   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
97   Idem. See also Bundy (1987) op.cit. on the notion of 'generational consciousness'.

According to Hyslop, "African secondary school pupils increased in numbers from under 600 000 in 1980 to over a million in 1984."[98] It is from this base that COSAS recruited its members and supporters. With the establishment of youth organisations, COSAS became, almost exclusively, an organisation of high and primary school students. University students found it difficult to participate in COSAS, and ended up participation in youth structures. This is borne out by the following remarks from Andile:

> "Those who are activists at university, like myself, find, when they return home that there are no university students organisations in East London which captures their interests. We find that we are forced to join existing youth structures. ..... The problem with university students is that universities are far away."[99]

Up to 1983, COSAS seems to have been concerning itself with issues around "the limits of compulsory education, a concession introduced in certain areas in 1980; unfair matric results; prohibition of students over 18 in standard eight and over 20 in standard ten from attending school, a measure imposed after 1976 to curb student activism."[100]

From the beginning of 1984, "student focus on issues of power and control over the educational process was expressed in demands such as the national campaign for democratic SRCs[101] in every school, which COSAS launched in early 1984. An end to corporal punishment and sexual harassment of pupils was also demanded."[102] The issue of the SRCs was also tackled by the East London students. This took the form of contesting the 'prefect' system. The latter was a system in terms of which student leaders were nominated by the authorities, without any participation by students. In its place, COSAS advocated the Students' Representative Councils (SRCs). According to Mcebisi,[103] the issue tended to divide the East London students. Some students argued that there was nothing wrong with the particular prefects (individuals) in their institutions. For example, they would argue that "so and so is our prefect and we do not see anything wrong with that, we never heard him reporting us to the authorities. Now new faces are emerging overnight,

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98   Hyslop op. cit. p 190.
99   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
100   Chisholm op. cit. pp 15-16.
101   SRC stands for Student Representative Council.
102   Chisholm op. cit. p 16.
103   Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.

saying that so and so must resign."[104] In this regard, students were drawing a distinction between the prefect system and the individual prefects.

COSAS leaders were caught up in a trap of which most resistance organisations in South Africa fell foul, merely opposing and seeking to destroy structures without giving a clear thought of what it is that they were opposing and destroying, what it is that will replace the existing unwanted structure, and most importantly, whether sufficient resources exist to make the new structure(s) work.

At the same time, a renewed series of boycotts began,[105] initially around limited, educational issues. According to Hyslop, the "initial issue at stake was the marking of the 1983 matriculation. ..... (I)n the period 1980 and 1983 pass rates had dropped sharply, leading to suspicions that the authorities were manipulating the results to limit the number of high school graduates."[106] East London schools experienced sporadic boycotts by students. The most active were students from Qaqamba High School, who among other things wanted the principal to resign. At the time of the Duncan Village uprising in August 1985, there were tensions between the principal and students. The strength and militancy of the students was demonstrated by the fact that all but one of the schools were burnt down and destroyed during the 1985 uprisings.

The Non-School Going and Non-Working Youth

We have seen that the political youth drew its audience from students, workers and youth excluded from the school system and not working. The question must be asked, what became of the non-school going and non working youth, the 'tsotsis'? It is argued that this category was not affected by the introduction of politics amongst the youth during this period. The reason is that they were marginalised by the political youth in the sense that the various activities of the latter did not address the concerns of 'tsotsis' and the 'ngxungxus' for that matter. For example, struggles at the time focussed on students issues like the SRC, worker issues like the recognition of trade unions, better wages and working conditions, and polemics. None of these interested the 'tsotsis'. As a result, they distanced themselves from these initial struggles of students, workers and school leavers. According to Mcebisi:

104 Idem.
105 For an account of the 1984 boycotts, see Bot op. cit.
106 Hyslop (1988) op. cit. p 193.

"The attitude of these chaps was that they would not associate themselves with the struggles at the time because they were not schooling and not working."[107]

The 'tsotsis' continued to exist as a distinct heterogeneous category vis-a-vis the political and educated youth. According to Mcebisi, in terms of their educational qualifications, they came from those who dropped out during the early years of schooling. It was "not possible to identify one with a standard six."[108] Chops corroborates this view. In his words: "I haven't come across educated people doing that."[109] Film and adventure books remained their preoccupation. In short, the political wave following the Soweto uprisings had very little influence on this category.

Changes could perhaps be identified at the level of the criminal element. In the past, this element used to terrorise people in their struggles for control of territories. We saw earlier on that the notions of **bosses** and **grabbing** were pervasive amongst the youth. After 1976, their influence among the youth waned and the youth scene was dominated by the political youth. Fights to determine who the **boss** is were restricted to 'tsotsis' alone. In other words, 'tsotsis' during this period were marginal, though they continued to lead their hair raising and adventurous lives.

As before, they were not organised in gangsters, with a name, as the case was in places like Johannesburg and Cape Town. But there is an important sense in which it could be said that they were organised. For example, "they can identify each other when they meet in town. They have a common secret language (**isicamto**), with its origins from the secret language of prisoners."[110] Further, they teach each other the tricks of the trade when it comes to stealing, robbing, stabbing, protecting each other, and so on. Mcebisi observed that "they are so protective of each other that if one of them has been beaten, they take sides with him. You hit one, you have hit all."[111]

In sum, on the eve of the 1985 uprisings in Duncan Village, 'tsotsis' existed, albeit with less visibility than before, without any attempts to conscientise and politicise them. Youth organisations, whose task it was to do the job were too divided to even contemplate taking

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107   Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.
108   Idem.
109   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
110   Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.
111   Idem.

on such an onerous task of organising 'tsotsis'. But 'tsotsis' had lost their pull as the key youth actors in the townships; political youth were now the kingpins.

The 'bumpkins

By this time this term had lost its original meaning, which referred to people fresh from the countryside who were intimidated by the city. At times the term was used to "a person who has no girl friends, does not go to the films, does not dress fashionably, does not speak the secret language, for example, calling a knife 'dagger', and not just knife (**imela**)."[112] With the intervention of the political youth, such divisions were discouraged. The concept of 'comrade' (**qabane**) became a household name, especially among the politically conscious. Since hardly any political work was conducted amongst the 'tsotsis', the concept of a 'bumpkin' (**umxhaka**) continued to exist in their vocabulary. 'Tsotsis' did not take kindly to being marginalised. The term **umxhaka** assumed a new meaning amongst 'tsotsis'. Anyone who did not associate with them became **umxhaka**. According to Mcebisi:

> "Even those who grew up here, who go to church, all those who have planned, orderly lives, are 'bumpkins' in the eyes of 'tsotsis' and 'clevers'."[113]

As this category was losing its meaning, those who would have been categorised as such were absorbed in other youth categories.

Conclusion

An attempt has been made above to map out the youth scene during the period between June 1976, the outbreak of the Soweto uprisings, and 1985, the unprecedented uprising in Duncan Village. We saw that this period saw the rise of the youth as a potential political force in the struggle against apartheid. Unlike before 1960, youth were far more central in taking the initiative in mass action. However, flaws in youth organisation were very noticeable as well. The youth struggle went through basically two phases, a phase strongly influenced by the Black Consciousness thinking, which was later superceded by Charterist thinking. At the same time, it has been argued that the political organisation of the youth was affected by political repression on the part of both the South African state and its Ciskei collaborators, on the one hand, and internal political divisions orchestrated by

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112   Interview with Mcebisi 4/1/92.
113   Idem.

former political prisoners on the other. In its political organisation and mobilisation, the school drop outs, who were not working were visibly left out. In the light of what happened during and after the 1985 Duncan Village uprisings, this omission proved to have been a terrible mistake.

CHAPTER 6

INSURRECTION, UNGOVERNABILITY AND DEFIANCE: 1985 - 1989 - THE ROLE OF THE EAST LONDON YOUTH.

The mid-1980s in South Africa generally experienced an unprecedented mass uprising in African townships in which the youth were central actors. It is, above all, the period between 1984 and 1986 that militant mass mobilisation and resistance to the state reached a scale and duration unprecedented in the history of resistance in South Africa. Resistance took various forms, for example, school and consumer boycotts, strikes and political violence. At the height of the resistance, government created local authority structures in many areas were pushed aside and replaced by 'organs of people's power'. This marked an insurrectionary climate in the form of 'dual power' of sorts. In Duncan Village, the insurrectionary moment began in 1985, after the funeral of Victoria Mxenge.[1] Within a week, the homes of 'community councillors' had been burnt down. They abandoned their homes and the location, and had to stay in hotels in East London. For over two years, Duncan Village was without Community Councillors. In their place, 'organs of people's power', in the form of street committees and people's courts, were established. In all of this, the youth played a central role. As Straker puts it: "The youngster who did not participate in these popular uprisings was the exception rather than the rule."[2]

The initial response of the state to this challenge was ever increasing repression. On 25 July 1985, on the day of the funeral of the 'Cradock four', Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkhonto and Sicelo Mhlawuli, who were brutally murdered under suspicious circumstances, a partial state of emergency was declared. East London was not at first affected by the state of emergency. However, within a month after the declaration of the partial state of emergency, Duncan Village was on fire. The reaction of the state was brutal. Within a week of the start of the uprisings in Duncan Village, a minimum of 19 people had been killed, and about 320 injured, a clear sign that the state was not willing to

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1   Mrs Victoria Mxenge was the wife of a human rights lawyer, Griffith Mxenge, who was murdered under mysterious circumstances in 1981. She also died under similar circumstances in Umlazi, Durban in August 1985. Her murder also sparked off violent unrests in hitherto 'quiet' Natal. Regarding the latter, see Hughes H (1987). Violence in Inanda, August 1985. In <u>Journal of Southern African Studies</u>, Vol 13, No 3, April.

2   Straker G (1992). <u>Faces in the Revolution</u> (Cape Town:David Phillip).

compromise. On 12 June 1986, a nation-wide state of emergency was declared. Thousands of activists were detained for lengthy periods of time. In the meantime, during 1987, whilst continuing with its repressive strategy on activists, the state, through its securocrats, identified certain areas, the so-called 'oil-spots', which were affected by the insurrection, for upgrading in order to diffuse the rebellious mood. Duncan Village was one such area. By 1988, the first houses had been built, and the plan was to convert Duncan Village into a black middle class area--while over two-thirds of its existing population would be relocated. The above should be viewed against the background of a sinking economy and deteriorating conditions, particularly in Duncan Village, which had been neglected ever since the state decided to disestablish it and move its residents to Mdantsane.

The main purpose of this section is to analyse the role of youth in the insurrection, ungovernability and defiance period from 1984 to the end of the decade. It will be argued that the insurrection had a dual nature. It started spontaneously, encouraged by the 'necklacing' of a soldier at Mxenge's funeral. In this regard, the youth, both organised and unorganised, including the hitherto neglected category of 'tsotsis', played a central and dominant role. It will be argued that the intervention of the 'tsotsis' contributed a lot to the violence, and at times, chaos, that characterised this period. Be that as it may, attempts were made by the Duncan Village Residents' Association (DVRA), a UDF affiliate, to give political direction to the insurrection. Under the banner of the DVRA, attempts were made to establish street committees and 'organs of people's power'. In this chapter, attention will be given to, in particular, how organs of people's power emerged, who its participants were and how they went about doing their business. Further, the effects of the reform strategy, in the form of upgrading, will also be assesssed, in particular, as it had the potential to make conspicuous a black middle class. With upgrading, chances existed for the better paid workers, including aspirant youth, to own middle class houses. It will be argued though, that by the end of the decade, the state hadn't succeeded in suppressing resistance, despite the fact that it had effectively broken the back of the insurrection. Throughout the above analysis, the question that will run like the proverbial red thread is: Which categories of the youth were involved, and what role did they play in the events during this period?

The 1985 Uprisings and the Aftermath

Background

Before discussing the 1985 uprisings and their aftermath, a brief background to the conditions in Duncan Village at the time is important. The 1985 uprisings were to a great

degree a rebellion against these conditions, and the treatment residents were receiving from the state. We have seen above that the state's strategy in dealing with overcrowding and the appalling conditions emanating from that was to disestablish Duncan Village and relocate all its African population to Mdantsane. Duncan Village would be upgraded and occupied by Coloureds and Indians. The process started in 1963. By 1981, Tsolo, Mekeni and New Brighton sections had been demolished. Tsolo became the industrial section of Braelyn, whilst the other two have become a Coloured area called Pefferville. Of the four sections making up the old East Bank locations, only Thula Ndivile section still existed in the early 1980's.[3]

However, it gradually became clear that the government was not achieving its objective of relocating all Africans in Duncan Village to Mdantsane. According to the chairman of the Eastern Cape Administration Board, the "official population in Duncan Village was 52 000 about 12 years ago. Today the official population is 48 000 although 82 000 have already been moved to Mdantsane."[4]

Despite the above, the government was still determined to go ahead with its relocation scheme. In 1981, the Deputy Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr George Morrison, on a visit to East London, reiterated that Duncan Village would be disestablished, adding that more money would be made available to hasten the process.[5] On the 4 December of that year, Ciskei was to attain its 'independence' from South Africa. This had grave implications for ex-Duncan Village residents. They would lose their South African citizenship on removal.[6] The Ciskei by that time had established itself as a severely repressive arm of the South Africa coercive machinery, and was thus not an attractive alternative. Objection to the removal of people to Mdantsane was raised at the launch of a Border Civic Organisation, formed by about 400 residents of Mdantsane and Duncan Village, and addressed by students, teachers, representatives of trade unions and the United Women's Organisation. One of the speakers, Kobo, reminded the audience that they were "not citizens of the Ciskei or the Transkei - we are citizens of South Africa". He said these words to cries of "One Azania, One Nation".[7]

3   Daily Dispatch 13 November 1981.
4   Daily Dispatch 25 July 1977. See also Kruger F (1990). Village Talk: Local Negotiations in East London. Unpublished paper, p 5.
5   Daily Dispatch 13 November 1981.
6   Kruger (1990) op. cit. p 6.
7   Daily Dispatch 20 July 1981.

Objections to the government statement did not only come from residents; there were objections from the community councillors too. The East London City Council added its voice of protest. One implication of the government's refusal to budge on the disestablishment of Duncan Village was that its residents could not benefit from the government's decision to allow the private sector, for example, the Urban Foundation, to assist urban blacks on housing. Very little, if anything at all, was done to improve conditions in Duncan Village, for the simple reason that the possibility always existed that it would be removed.

Local employers were also not happy with the removals. This was in the form of an editorial opinion of the local newspaper, the Daily Dispatch entitled: "Where to house workers?" The newspaper pointed that "East London would be the country's only major city 'that is to be denied an urban residential area for blacks[8]'", and further indicated that "there could be labour problems as industrialists in the city would have 'no influence over living conditions of employers after they are moved to a foreign state'"[9]

The government grudgingly reversed its longstanding rigid position that Duncan Village would be disestablished as and when accommodation became available in Mdantsane. On 24 June 1983, the Star newspaper reported that "because of economic and other practical considerations, the government has decided that the portion of the black residential area known as Ziphunzana, adjacent to Duncan Village, shall be retained and upgraded." However, the area called 'Duncan Village proper', the slum area of Ndende street and surrounding areas, comprising about 2 500 families, would still be cleared, and its inhabitants rehoused in Mdantsane. 'Duncan Village proper', as councillor Florence Magala explained to residents, included "Majombozi and Mekeni areas, and not only Ndende section, as some believe."[10] On his side, though, Makatala, chairman of the community council proudly declared: "Half a loaf is better than no bread."[11]

Most probably realising that chances of accommodation being available in Mdantsane were very slim, the government, through the Eastern Cape Administration Board, decided to demolish the shacks in Ndende street, without making any arrangements for alternative accommodation, as originally promised. The government invoked an old law, the Blacks

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8   The Riekert Commission of 1979 had recommended, inter alia, that residential areas be provided for Africans with permanent urban rights (insiders).
9   Kruger (1990) op. cit. p 6.
10   Daily Dispatch 4 July 1983.
11   Daily Dispatch 24 June 1983.

(Urban Areas) Consolidation Act No 25 of 1945, which divided Africans in terms of 'legals' (insiders) and 'illegals' (outsiders).

The resolve of the squatters to stay is best expressed by a remark that was made by one of them, declaring: "We may spend the night in the street today, but we shall go to Arcadia[12] to get more iron to build new homes tomorrow".[13] People preferred a life of uncertainty to losing their South African citizenship by moving to Mdantsane.

Although Makatala, chairman of the community council, indicated that they were not consulted about the demolition of the shacks, they had agreed with the government that their co-operation in the removals was to be sought. There were suspicions amongst residents that the councillors might have collaborated with the government in the demolitions. According to Chops:

"In 1984 a meeting was called to discuss resistance to being removed to Mdantsane. A committee called the Anti Removal Committee was formed. Councillors were called to explain issues around removals, but did not turn up. Tension ensued."[14]

On 24 June 1985, the Daily Dispatch reported that the DVRA called a meeting of Duncan Village residents, at which it was disclosed that Duncan Village residents had been living under a "cloud of insecurity and secrecy" concerning their future in the area. Residents were told:

"Our future has been discussed without considering our feelings, our views or our fears. This has been the attitude and practice of the government for too long and we strongly resent it."[15]

A declaration, to be placed before the councillors, the government, and published nationally and internationally was read to the meeting. It stated, inter alia:

"We, the residents of Duncan Village, have lived here for many years. This is our home, however humble. Our forefathers are buried here. We know no other home,

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12   Arcadia is a shopping complex.
13   Daily Dispatch 26 January 1984.
14   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
15   Daily Dispatch 24 June 1985.

nor do we want another home.... We intend to resist, albeit peacefully, any attempt to move us against our wish. Because many of our homes are sub-standard, we are not adverse to rehabilitation within the East London area."[16]

At the time of the uprisings, the whole of Duncan Village, with an estimated population of 80 000 people, had the following facilities; one clinic, two soccer fields, one rugby field, two tennis courts, eleven net ball courts and one swimming pool. There was no cinema.[17]

The above provides a background to conditions in Duncan Village on the eve of the uprisings that were to plunge Duncan Village in particular and South Africa in general in a mass uprising and mobilisation unknown in its history. It is argued that the above conditions provided fertile ground for the uprisings.

The Uprisings.

It is in the Vaal Triangle that the uprisings started towards the end of 1984. East London structures did not immediately respond to developments in the Vaal. Developments seemed to follow a similar pattern to the 1976 Soweto uprisings, in terms of the Vaal taking the lead, and the rest of the country following. As we have seen, the East London political youth were still divided. Moreover, East London structures had just emerged from a long-drawn and complex bus boycott (1983-1984), and were obviously tired when the Vaal Triangle uprisings started. It is only in August of 1985, after the funeral of Mxenge in Ciskei, that East London added its weight to the insurrection that was gripping the rest of the country. Until then, East London locations were relatively quiet, save, as seen above, for the sporadic activities of students and resistance by members of the squatter communities. East London, though, was not alone in this regard. As indicated in an earlier footnote, Natal had been 'quiet' until the death of Mrs Mxenge. Further, it is only from July 1985 that the Western Cape became involved in the insurrection.[18]

The funeral of Mrs Mxenge was held on the 11 August 1985. At the funeral, a Ciskei soldier was identified by the crowd and was subsequently 'necklaced' (burnt with a tyre around the neck). After the funeral, and on their way back from the funeral, the Duncan Village youth, apparently inspired by what they saw at the funeral, took a decision to take

16   Idem.
17   Daily Dispatch 25 April 1985.
18   See Bundy (1987) op cit; and Hyslop (1988) op. cit. p 195.

action against those associated with the state, namely councillors, and state property. This was clearly a spontaneous decision. Chops, a prominent political figure in Duncan Village, was not aware of such a decision. Recalling how he got to know about developments in Duncan Village on the 11 August, he said:

"In 1985, there was a funeral of Victoria Mxenge at Kwa Rwayi. People left in buses and attended the funeral. On that day I was on duty. An hour before leaving work I heard that Duncan Village was on fire. When I arrived, I saw that Duncan Village was indeed on fire. People who witnessed things say that action started in the Ziphunzana section where the Rent office was burnt down. Then followed the bottle store, the post office, schools and so on."[19]

It is not exactly clear how the uprisings started. Some claim that the bottle store was the first target, whilst others allege that Qaqamba Secondary School was the first to be destroyed. With regard to the latter, we have seen that there had been unrest in the school for quite some time. Peter gave the following account of the unrest at Qaqamba:

"Before the uprisings, students had their complaints. They protested and boycotted classes well before the uprisings. PTSA's[20] were formed. I represented parents. The aim was to establish a forum to address students' grievances, creating an opportunity for students to learn, rather than boycott classes. There was very little cooperation from the DET. Principals tended to listen to the DET, with the result that students rejected the attitude of the DET and continued with their boycotts."[21]

Whatever the details are, one thing seems indisputable, namely, there was mass destruction during that week-end. All but one of the nine schools were burnt down,[22] so were the Rent office, bottle store, post office and the houses of the community councillors. The latter were forced to take refuge in East London hotels.

There was initially confusion as to who was behind the uprisings. No organised structure emerged as the leader of the uprisings. What seems clear from almost all the sources consulted was that the **youth** of various categories were prominent actors. Those from

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19   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
20   An abbreviation for Parents Teachers Students Associations.
21   Interview with Peter 12/1/93.
22   See Kruger F (1986). DET Destroys Education in Duncan Village. In Work in Progress, No 45, November/December; & (1989) op. cit.

organised groups acted more in their individual capacities, than representatives of their organisations. The nature of the uprising itself was such that anyone could be involved. Below is Chops' version of what was happening:

"It was started by the youth, not necessarily those involved in youth organisations, but everybody, organised and unorganised, eventually got involved. There was looting and the like."[23]

Mcebisi suggests that there was a community of interests between the political youth, who were opposed to the councillors, and what he calls, "the unruly youth, itching to act". Although the objectives of the various groupings were not the same, there seems to have been unanimity on the targets and the strategies. Students and the political youth in particular exploited the occasion to hit back at authorities and authority structures like councillors and schools. 'Tsotsis', on the other hand, saw an opportunity to further their criminal interests. Responding to the question, who led the uprisings, he averred:

"It was the organised youth. I remember in 1985 that there was a Duncan Village Youth Movement, with Congress leanings. But there was the ever ready militant unruly youth, waiting on the fringes for action. It was a mixture of those who were organised and were against councillors and the unruly youth itching to act. Things got hot, the youth carried picks to destroy a bridge to block access by the police. Some youth were shot dead."[24]

In short, it seems clear that events of the first few days of the uprising were spontaneous, with the youth from almost all the various categories, including the hitherto neglected category of 'tsotsis', playing a prominent role. Later on, the DVRA emerged as almost the only organised structure, to give direction to the insurrection. An interesting question could be asked: What became of SAAWU, especially given its leading role in the struggles of the early 1980s? By late 1985, SAAWU was locked in all kinds of struggles over the question of the establishment of one giant union, which later led to the establishment of the Congress of South African Trade Unions late in 1985. Youth political structures, as we saw, were divided at the outbreak of the insurrection, and did not recover quickly enough to take command of things. The other structure that could have taken a lead was the

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23 Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
24 Interview with Mcebisi 4/1/92. See also Kruger (1990) op. cit. p 9.

United Democratic Front (UDF). It, too, was not strong enough to be influential in events following the uprisings.

It is not clear when the DVRA was established. According to Chops, the organisation was established in 1984, largely to resist the removal of people from Duncan Village to Mdantsane. However, the organisation was first mentioned in the press in June 1985.[25] According to Kruger, the DVRA existed, at the start of the uprisings, as "an interim structure, and was only formally launched in October."[26] Be that as it may, there does not seem to be any doubt that, when the uprisings started, the DVRA, in whatever form it was structured, attempted to give direction to the uprisings. It seems clear that its members were taken by surprise by the events of the week-end of the funeral of Mrs Mxenge. Their response was to call a meeting of residents, on 15 August 1985, four days after the Mxenge funeral. Attended by about 10 000 residents, the meeting took a conciliatory attitude to what was happening. It decided that "each street should appoint people who would see to it that peace prevailed in the area and that people were not intimidated or robbed by elements who pretended to be 'liberators'".[27] The latter were 'tsotsis', who, as intimated, were exploiting the militant and rebellious mood against authorities and authority structures by students and the political youth, for their own ends. At the same time, the meeting took a tough position and decided to launch a rent boycott.[28]

It should be noted that even at this early stage, the DVRA was calling for the setting up of street committees, organs that were to be central in the running of Duncan Village in the absence of community councillors who had fled. We shall see below the extent to which the DVRA managed to establish itself as an influential organisation in giving direction to the struggles of the time.

A number of incidents were reported during the week immediately after the week-end of the uprisings. Duncan Village became a 'no-go' area, with police warning motorists: "Avoid Duncan Village." They warned that people "should choose an alternative route as several private vehicles have been extensively damaged and motorists seriously injured". Taxis and buses too avoided the area and used other routes.[29]

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25 Kruger (1990) op. cit. p 7.
26 Ibid. pp 9-10.
27 Daily Dispatch 16 August 1985.
28 Kruger (1990) op. cit. p 10.
29 Daily Dispatch 15 August 1985.

On 31 August 1985, a mass funeral was held for the victims of police violence. Reading the militant and angry mood of those at the funeral, Steve Tshwete, regional president of the UDF, demanded that the South African government should step down and "hand over power to Nelson Mandela and other leaders of the people". He went on to warn that the unrest would move out of the townships.[30] No particular concrete plan was proposed, though. At the funeral, two men from Kwazakhele in Port Elizabeth were accused by an "angry group as informers. A tyre was placed around the neck of one of them, and only the intervention of church ministers saved him."[31] After the funeral, four white men were attacked by mourners returning from the funeral. It is not clear why they were attacked. Some claim that they drove into the crowd. Two of them were killed, one burnt inside the car, and the other stabbed. The other two were seriously wounded.[32] On the whole, there was general hostility against whites. Making the latter point, Andile emphasised:

> "BBC cars and even Franz Kruger[33] never could set foot in Duncan in 1985 because there was no discrimination, whites were beaten, whether a comrade or what, there was no such distinction. That is how things are in East London, people are not accustomed to whites in the struggle. Non-racialism exists only in theory .... The liberal influence in East London is absent and the militancy is very raw and bound up with nationalism."[34]

After a month of violent confrontations, two Bishops, the Anglican Bishop of Grahamstown and the Catholic Bishop of Port Elizabeth, visited Duncan Village, and later issued a joint statement to the effect that young people they spoke to admitted that they became involved in the violence because of "anger".[35] The Star newspaper reported that "arsonists angry with apartheid are setting fire to ruins - the same rubble they torched the night before".[36] What the above suggests is that most of the violence was indiscriminate.

The state's response was swift and violent. Police confirmed that 32 people were fatally wounded and 138 injured over the week-end of the outbreak of the uprisings.[37] By that

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30   City Press 8 September 1985.
31   Idem.
32   It should be noted that East London has got a strong tradition of African nationalism, in terms of which there is generally revulsion against 'whites' (**amabhulu/abelungu**). See the 1952 'riots' above.
33   A popular and progressive journalist reporting for the Weekly Mail.
34   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
35   Daily Dispatch 17 September 1985.
36   The Star 14 September 1985.
37   Daily Dispatch 16 August 1985.

time, violence in the rest of South Africa had claimed an estimated figure of 670 lives over the last year.[38] In many cases, their violence was equally indiscriminate. In a joint statement, the bishops remarked about the violence they saw and were told about in Duncan Village:

"However, the excessive violence alleged to have been used by the security forces, of which we saw and heard much evidence, has made the situation worse and not healed it. Our experiences amount to nothing when compared to the horrifying ordeal that everyday life in Duncan Village has become. Arbitrary arrests and unchecked excesses on the part of the SADF and SAP do not constitute maintenance of law and order."[39]

Unlike the 1952 'riots', which took place overnight, the 1985 uprisings were sustained. There was violence from all directions, the youth on the one hand, and the police and South African Defence Force (SADF), on the other.

"It took time, so much so that people's houses were burnt, many people 'necklaced', some councillors chased away, and so on. People were not shot on a single day, they were shot at over days. Some were shot by councillors, others by the police, some by the SADF and riot units."[40]

As indicated, the struggles of the mid-1980s can be analysed at two levels, namely, spontaneous violent actions by the youth, especially the 'tsotsis', and attempts by political organisations, particularly those affiliated to the UDF, to give direction to things. So far we have looked at the spontaneous, politically directionless side of things. In what follows, we shall take a look at attempts by the DVRA, a UDF affiliate, to interpret and give direction to the mid 1980s struggles in Duncan Village.

The fleeing of the community councillors, leaving a vacuum, gave an opportunity to the DVRA to set up its own alternative structures. The theory informing their organisation was based on the ANC plan that emerged after the 1952 Defiance Campaign, the M(andela)-plan. In simple terms, the plan suggests a strategy of organising at street level upwards. According to Chops:

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38   The Star 14 September 1985.
39   Daily Dispatch 17 September 1985.
40   Interview with Mcebisi 4/1/92.

"After the 1985 uprisings, we in Duncan Village, implemented the M-plan. We met every Sunday and we were accountable to the Residents Association."[41]

We have seen above that when the DVRA called its first meeting after the uprisings, it urged residents to organise at street level. Research still needs to be done to establish how exactly these structures were formed, who the 'knowledgeable' people were, and so on.[42] As a guess, one can assume that former ANC members played some role in assisting in setting up these structures. After all, it has been pointed out in an earlier chapter that former Robben Island ANC prisoners were active among the youth. Further, it is not clear whether the evolution of these structures was in any way caused by the belated ANC call to render the country ungovernable and create organs of people's power as alternatives - the notion of 'dual power'. All Chops could say was:

"When the Duncan Village Residence Association was set up, structures were also established, including 'people's courts', to look at matters affecting the community.[43]

In fact, it was after the uprisings, when local structures had collapsed, that 'people's courts', as alternative 'popular' or 'people's structures, became prominent.

Were these structures effective? According to Mcebisi, "there is no structure in East London that implemented the Mandela Plan as DVRA".[44] However, it is important to take the following into account: Firstly, a crucial point that needs to be made is that, the DVRA, like almost all the political organisations in the area, was a young, inexperienced organisation, whose members showed dedication and commitment, but nonetheless required training and skills development on how to run alternative local government. Secondly, there does not seem to have been any clear and concrete plan on how to implement ungovernability and what 'organs of people's power' were and how they should be run. Thirdly, the exact relationship between the DVRA and the youth as such, particularly the 'tsotsis', was not always clear. Without any clear-cut procedures, and given

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41 Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
42 Kruger (1989) op. cit. p 9, suggests: "Participants are still hesitant to talk about the tactics employed and the battles fought." It is however hoped that with the changing nature of things, it will be possible to research this important area.
43 Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
44 Interview with Mcebisi 4/1/92.

police brutality and harassment, coupled with an uncontrollable 'tsotsi' element, the DVRA had a mammoth task.

The DVRA had, according to Kruger, street committees and nine area committees, through which, among others, some "cleaning was organised, and residents once repaired potholes in the main road, the Douglas Smith Highway."[45] As we have seen, 'people's courts' were set up too. There does not seem to have been any defined procedures for administering these courts. A lot seems to have depended on the particular court. For example, Andile relates that 'those with a rural background' helped them a lot in dealing with, for instance, pregnancy cases.

> "Those with a rural background were good debaters in meetings of street committees. They helped us a lot in solving cases of pregnancy, for example. We deliberately went out of our way to get their experiences. We emphasised the interaction of the youth and adults. We encouraged adults to participate in structures."[46]

According to Andile, the rural youth was the backbone of these structures. They were courageous and disciplined. Andile avers that their discipline derives from their rural upbringing:

> "To me that shows that the dimension of discipline is not particularly linked to the struggle, but the kind of discipline you get in rural areas."[47]

This is how Andile sums up the rural youth that participated in his street committee:

> "It is this type of youth that is strong and one can see that they are debaters. Xhosa is the medium and the rural youth are orators[48] and impressive. They are

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45   Kruger (1990) op. cit. p 10.
46   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
47   Idem.
48   According to McAllister & Deliwe: "Boys became members of the intlombe after circumcision into adulthood, and remained in it as young men (abafana) for up to twenty years or more, in some casses. Whereas boys were characterised as settling things 'with the stick', in the intlombe meetings it was skill in oratory and debate that counted, and violence was taboo. Men settled things 'with words' and a young man found in possession of a knife, for example, at an intlombe meeting, would be severely punished." McAllister P & Deliwe D (1993). Youth in rural Transkei: The Demise of 'traditional' youth associations and the development of new forms of association and activity - 1975 to 1993. A Report for the Human Sciences Research Council's Cooperative Programme on the Youth. (Rhodes University: Institute of

respectful. Everyone is a comrade (**iqabane**), but there is respect shown for older people."[49]

The picture that emerges here is that some of these structures, like the above, were well organised. The discipline of their peoples' courts was generally supported. They did a lot to discourage crime, particularly stabbing. People who stabbed were visited by corporal punishment:

"During that time, the use of the knife was rare. Duncan Village is the home of knives. From sunset the knife gets used. It was possible for the first time to move freely at eleven at night. In the past, Duncan Village was notorious for its battles over territory. One wouldn't go to another area without being molested."[50]

Generally, the administration of justice was instant:

"It was instant justice, especially in the event you were caught red handed. Some men openly admitted beating their wives, arguing that it was a domestic issue. That would be taken as an admission of guilt."[51]

The main advantage of DVRA, vis-a-vis the youth, was its youthful nature, particularly if one compares it with the Mdantsane Residents' Association (MDARA), where the gap between the youth and adults was significantly wide. In Mdantsane, it seems, the resistance organisations as such hardly challenged the criminal elements.

Some were beginning to make claims that Duncan Village had become a liberated zone. With time, though, and with a "relentless campaign" by the security forces "against community leadership, it became more and more difficult for the DVRA to maintain its authority over undisciplined elements in the youth, and there were increasing reports of excesses."[52] It is to these "undisciplined elements" and "excesses" that we now turn.

Social and Economic Research), p 8. See also Mayer P (1970). Socialisation by Peers. In Mayer P (ed) Socialisation: An Approach from Social Anthropology (London:Tavistock).
49   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
50   Interview with Mcebisi 4/1/92.
51   Idem.
52   Kruger (1990) op. cit. p 11.

sense of power.... Although the leaders are 17 year olds, many of the gangsters are 14 or 13 years old, with complete disdain for adults."[57]

Apart from the emphasis on extreme youth, the above fits our description of the criminal 'tsotsi' element discussed in the early parts of this study, a group of 'boys' that is not working, not schooling and not involved in any youth political activity. The violent nature of the struggles of the mid 1980's gave them an opportunity to exploit politics for their criminal ends. They attended meetings, but only to listen for resolutions, calling for action of some kind. Mcebisi puts his observations in dramatic style:

"In times of action, whilst we hold meetings and articulate positions, they attend such meetings and listen. The minute a decision is taken to boycott busses, for instance, they will leave the meeting and disappear. By the time the meeting is over, a few busses will have been stoned. This is how they operate, they like anything that tends to be disruptive, that is what they enjoy."[58]

Andile makes a similar point, demonstrating how unaccountable 'tsotsis' were and how they simply acted without being given the go ahead:

"They wait for decisions to be taken that a certain person be picked up to be beaten or given lashes, they jump up, they like that type of thing. They are part of the struggle in a sense but their commitment is not strong. ...... They are adventurous. .... They continued to burn municipal vehicles and we used to warn them against that. There was that tension and they wouldn't understand. They enjoyed provoking the 'boers', they had no sense of strategy and tactic, they were adventurous."[59]

Whilst others saw Duncan Village as a liberated zone in the political sense of having effectively, though temporarily, ridden the township of community councillors, 'tsotsis' had their own version of Duncan Village as a liberated zone. They exploited space created during the uprisings, which made it almost impossible for the police to enter Duncan Village, for their own ends.

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57   Daily Dispatch 7 March 1986.
58   Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.
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57 Daily Dispatch 7 March 1986.
58 Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.
59 Interview with Andile 5/11/90.

"In 1985, for instance, criminals flocked to Duncan Village because police vehicles could not get in Duncan Village. You could see and smell a cloud of dagga smoke when walking in Duncan Village. No police could come and arrest people. On the other hand you'd find that whilst we were busy with the struggle, the criminal element is interested in pursuing their personal interests."[60]

It seems possible to understand the involvement of 'tsotsis' at two levels. At one level, there are those 'tsotsis' who exploited the insurrection mood to further their own criminal tendencies of robbing and so on. At another level, there are those 'tsotsis' who saw themselves as part of the struggle but who, precisely because they were never part of the political youth, and therefore lacked political education of whatever kind, brought with them their 'tsotsi' experience to the struggle. It is this group that was active in the 'organs of people's power' and that shot from the hip when it came to action. For example, there were a number of necklace killing court cases starting from about 1986. In this regard, two 18 year old youths were sentence to death for allegedly necklacing an informer near Freedom Square in Duncan Village on the night of 12 October 1985.[61]

Some residents, including members of DVRA were deeply worried by the uncontrollable behaviour of children, and felt, at times powerless to do anything about them.[62]

"There was the view that 'these boys' would burn or necklace those who intervened. Some of those in leadership were scared to speak out."[63]

But some ended up dedicating themselves to the struggle. Of these, Andile stated:

"They are quite courageous (**bakhuthele**) during periods of intense struggle. The interest of some of them is to cause trouble. But other end up being dedicated comrades. .... In our area there is one called Sir Bej. He attended the funeral of Jeff and he remarked: 'Hey, we abandoned tsotsism now, we are now comrades'. Sir Bej ... never went beyond standard six. ...... He was good in stabbing and brick throwing."[64]

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60   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
61   Eastern Cape Herald 23 July 1988.
62   Daily Dispatch 7 March 1986.
63   Interview with Mcebisi 4/1/92.
64   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.

But, it seems, the majority of 'tsotsis' who were active during this period were those who, according to Andile, were "not accountable". In terms of structures, there is a widely held view that they formed the core of the Youth Congress, which, it is generally accepted, was militant.[65] According to Andile, the Youth Congress "strongly identified with the **Umkhonto we Siswe** even though the latter was banned, they saw themselves as Tambo's soldiers."[66] It is apparently this group that people were scared of. According to Andile:

> "People are afraid of them because they stab, one cannot discuss politics with them. If you do not agree with them, they take out their knives. This confirms the notion that they are the **ngxungxus**, tsotsis without education but not those from rural areas. They come from the location."[67]

It is in the C Section of Duncan Village, which is "a sprawling slum" that most of the violence took place.[68] Due to overcrowding and congestion, it was difficult to establish street committees in this section. As the local newspaper put it, "in the jumbled shantytown of C Section, there are few streets to control."[69]

Students, according to Andile and other interviewees were attracted to the Youth Congress. Andile attributes this following to the "militant posture" of the Youth Congress. In his words: "Students tend to be very active in politics. They participate in youth structures." Andile is of the view that in terms of numbers, students were "the dominant element".[70]

The level of students' involvement in the struggles of the mid-1980's was demonstrated by the fact that in August 1985, COSAS was banned. Despite the banning of COSAS, students remained visible actors. Students and youth struggles were characterised by what Bundy described as "'immediatism': an impatient anticipation of imminent victory, a hubristic

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65 See Andile's comparison of the Youth Congress and the Youth League in the previous chapter.
66 Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
67 Ibid.
68 According to Kruger, a "heavily fortified command post was set up at a central point near C-Section, the most squalid and most militant area in the township. It was a symbol of the security forces' role as an occupying army." Kruger (1990) op. cit. p 9.
69 Daily Dispatch 7 March 1986. This must not be read to mean that there were no 'street committees' in the C-Section. Andile, whose home is in the C-Section, claims that there were 'street committees' in the area, involving, as we shall see below, not only the youth, but adults too.
70 Interview with Andile 5/11/90.

assessment of progress made, and a naive underestimation of the resources of the state."[71] This mood was best expressed by the slogan 'Liberation Now, Education Later' in terms of which "boycotts became a principle rather than a tactic."[72]

A category that never really got involved in the insurrection was the 'clevers' (**amajitha**), a group of urban born and bred working youth. According to Andile, "they are the 'clevers' and wouldn't want to expose themselves to arrest. ...... They do not like to waste their leisure time with meetings. That is why you find that they are passive in politics."[73]

What the above suggests is that, despite the fact that during this period those involved in the struggle were unified under the label **amaqabane**, the various backgrounds of the youth influenced the nature of their participation. This is how Andile sums it up:

> "The emphasis of these distinctions these days tends to be played down and people call each other 'comrades' (**amaqabane**), but an observer with a sociological eye is able to see the nuances."[74]

Intergenerational Tensions.

The youth played a vital role in the structures. According to Chops and some of the people interviewed, there were old men who participated in these structures. But it is the youth that was prominent.

> "Duncan Village is a squalid area. In some cases there would be screams of women. 'These boys' would come in and intervene. The youth caned such old people. They took them to the 'freedom square' and put them on a drum and caned them."[75]

The participation of the youth in 'people's courts' raised all kinds of inter-generational tensions. It has been said early on that one of the features of East London is its proximity

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71 Bundy (1987) op. cit. p 323.
72 Hyslop (1988) op. cit. p 197. Bundy is convincing when he suggests that "there is an essential dualism to youth politics: on the one hand, it is characteristically militant and dynamic; on the other hand, by its nature it is short on theoretical sophistication and experience. Youth/student politics in a time of crisis is a hybrid of precocity and immaturity." Bundy (1987) op. cit. p 330).
73 Interview with Andile 5/11/90.
74 Idem.
75 Interview with Mcebisi 4/1/92.

to the rural areas of Ciskei and Transkei. The bulk of its residents come from these areas. Whilst the urban life does change some of their ways, for example, wearing clothes and buying furniture, some of the rural practices are retained, albeit in altered forms, for example, circumcision and by implication, respect by the young of the old, and so on.

The patriarchal nature of African society is well-documented. The beating of women was part and parcel of it. So was the case with the beating of boys by men. Cases of 'boys' beating their fathers would make the dead shake in their graves. If and when it were to happen, the whole tribe would rise and severely punish the 'boy' involved! However, in South Africa's urban townships or locations, this kind of relationship was difficult to maintain. At certain, critical moments, for example, the beating of boys in 1958, men mobilised themselves, though such mobilisation and solidarity wouldn't hold for long. Chops recalls that when he was young, there was still respect for the old.

> "When I was young, my parents did not allow me to go to town. They thought I would meet friends who slept in pipes (**oomalala kupayipi**) and who would possibly influence me to join them. It happened that if you met an old person in town who knew you, he would pick you up, beat you and put you in a taxi back home. He would report you to your parents and your mother would, in his presence, beat you."[76]

But that solidarity amongst parents is rapidly disappearing, as Chops acknowledges:

> "But things have now changed. If such a thing were to happen today, my mother would be the first to shout at you, asking whether it is your duty to discipline her child. This contributes to inter-generational tensions."[77]

On the other hand, the youth was in a much more powerful position in the 1980s. They were numerically stronger, more militant and better organised than the men of East London; this possibly explains why the married men could not rise and revenge beatings by 'boys'. Corporal punishment for men who beat their wives by youths are problematic; elders fail to accept this process as having any legitimacy.

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76   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
77   Idem.

<u>Students</u>

All but one[78] of the nine schools were burnt in Duncan Village at the start of the uprisings. Before the uprisings, as has been said, the students were restless, using school boycotts as a strategy, and in isolated cases, resorted to violence in the form of throwing stones at the police and so on. During the uprisings, some students involved themselves in the political struggles of Duncan Village, and were active in youth structures. Some became a nuisance. Idleness amongst boys and girls led to, amongst other problems, pregnancies, and this worried parents.

"With time, a new element emerged, with the growth of people who were no longer at school, an element outside the school was growing, an element that was unruly. Amongst girls, pregnancy was on the increase. Parents became suspicious, even of activities of students. Their view was that they send their children to school and they end up pregnant."[79]

By the end of 1985 there was no accommodation for classes, and despite attempts to offer special tuition to students, no examinations were written.[80] Towards the end of 1985, a Duncan Village Corporation (Duvcor) was set up to provide alternative or temporary accommodation for students. The initiative involved local MPs and the self-exiled community councillors, amongst others. The DVRA was invited to the launch meeting. However, they declined the invitation, because of "community council meddling", adding that their organisation was an expression of the people's rejection of the community council.[81] Despite the DVRA's non participation, the project started at the beginning of 1986. It was, however, halted because of threats to the lives of the workers. Students backed the DVRA. An East London Students' Council issued a statement to the effect that although they were keen to return to classes, they were not prepared to go back to the temporary schools built by a private concern if community councillors were involved.[82] This threat was further linked to the DVRA, which had made it clear that they wanted all politicians and the community council out of the project.[83] One of the people the DVRA

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78   The only school that was left untouched was Ebenezer Majombozi Senior Secondary School, "which is on the outskirts of the township." Kruger (1986) op. cit. p 20.
79   Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.
80   Kruger (1986 & 1990) op. cit. Kruger claims that "only three students are believed to have written any exams at all." Kruger (1986) op. cit. p 20.
81   Daily Dispatch 20 December 1985.
82   City Press 16 February 1986.
83   For more detail on these aspects, see Kruger (1986 & 1990) op. cit.

objected to was a Mr Lightbody, co-chairman of Duvcor, for giving evidence in a trial of leaders of SAAWU.[84]

At the beginning of 1986, the DVRA followed a decision taken by the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee (SPCC),[85] that schools should open on 28 January 1986, and not 14 January, as decided upon by the department.[86] Although the department accepted the new date, Duncan Village students were told not to register on that date, as there were no school buildings. Temporary classes were supposed to be built by the DUVCOR. However, a week before 28 January, teachers resolved to follow the SPCC conference decision and register students, regardless of what the DET said. They argued that students "could be accommodated in church halls and other venues until the DUVCOR project was complete."[87] This arrangement, though, was rejected by the King William's Town based circuit inspector, G. van der Merwe. The DVRA responded by helping organising alternative venues in church halls "in direct defiance of the department."[88] Ultimately, four church hall venues were found, in addition to Ebenezer Majombozi high school.

Despite the above arrangements, no teaching and learning environment was possible. Some of the problems stated were a lack of discipline on the part of students, in terms of "wildly irregular" attendance,[89] for instance, and poor conditions. With regard to the latter, this is how Kruger describes the situation:

"Some venues had too few or no toilets. Overcrowding was severe and few educational aids existed. Blackboards and chalk had to be scrounged from the previous years leftovers at Ebenezer Majombozi. No exercise books or even teachers' copies of textbooks were available."[90]

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84 Daily Dispatch 23 April 1986.
85 The Soweto Parents Crisis Committee was set up by the Soweto Civic Association towards the end of 1985, in order to intervene and facilitate the return of students to classes. This initiative culminated in the establishment of the National Education Crisis Committee. See Hyslop (1988) op. cit. pp 199-201.
86 Although the DET accepted the new date, students in Duncan Village were told to stay at home as no schools existed. The DVRA, however, defied the department by organising alternative venues. See Kruger (1986) op. cit.
87 Kruger (1986) op. cit. p 21.
88 Ibid. p 20.
89 Some students, a minority, according to Kruger, "actively opposed the SPCC conference decision, arguing against any education until 1987." Kruger (1986) op. cit. p 22. This opposition ties neatly with the slogan 'Liberation Now, Education Later', and the call that some students were making towards the end of 1985 for 1986 to be 'The Year of No Schooling'. See Hyslop (1988) op. cit. p 197.
90 Kruger (1986) op. cit. p 21.

Quite clearly, the return to school campaign envisaged by the SPCC was translating into sheer tokenism. What was also not clear was the kind of syllabus that would be taught. By this time, various references were made to 'alternative education' or 'people's education'. As was the case with politics, these slogans could not translate into any concrete substance. No materials on 'people's education' were available, and teachers, many of whom had a Bantu Education background, and seriously underqualified, were not subjected to a teacher development programme in terms of which they would be trained on alternative teaching methods and so on. In Duncan Village, alternative education reduced itself to, among others, students raising "topics for discussion, with the teacher functioning as a chairperson", covering wide ranging topics like, "the consumer boycott; Nelson Mandela; the role of organisations like the Cape African Teachers' Association, ELPTU's[91] conservative rival; ANC history; sanctions and their effects; rebel sports tours; and critiques of newspapers."[92] Whilst these were very important topics to deal with, it remained unclear where exactly they fitted in, for example, a class of matric students. Some teachers argued that such discussions should not interfere with "ordinary teaching", and suggested that the discussions be scheduled "at the end of a lesson."[93]

In the meantime, students generally were making arrangements for the 16 June commemmoration. The DET responded by moving the closing date for the June vacation to 4 June. On 12 June, the nationwide state of emergency was declared. The Border commissioner of police used his powers to bar access to, inter alia, East London schools. When schools reopened in July, new tough procedures were introduced, for example, "ID cards, re-registration requirements and guards at schools."[94]

The above arrangement proved to be adding insult to injury, with students refusing to re-register, arguing, quite rightly, that they had done so at the beginning of the year. Further, students called a boycott in protest against the presence of security forces at the schools. In the meantime, the DET started to transfer teachers, ostensibly because there were too few students for the number of teachers.[95] This decision turned out to be the last straw that

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91   ELPTU stands for East London Progressive Teachers Union, established in April 1985 "to improve relations with students and the community by creating a clearly progressive teachers organisation." Kruger (1986) op. cit. p 20.
92   Kruger (1986) op. cit. p 23.
93   Idem.
94   Ibid., p 24.
95   The view of teachers, on the other hand, was that they were being victimised by the department for teaching at the community centres. Teachers who were left behind, for example, "had to cope with up to 100 pupils per class." Kruger (1986) op. cit. p 24.

broke the camel's back. A few days after the transfers were implemented, pupils marched out singing. Writing towards the end of 1986, Kruger remarked: "They have not come back since."[96] For the second year running, no examinations were written in 1986. Parents who could afford it sent their children to schools outside Duncan Village.

The Declaration of the State of Emergency

On 12 June 1986, the state, in response to the insurrectionary mood that had gripped the country, declared, a national state of emergency. The declaration was followed by massive detentions of political opposition. East London was no exception. By the end of the year, it was estimated that an estimated 300 community leaders were in detention.[97] Kruger suggests that "400 people were detained in the first days of the emergency, affecting the DVRA right down to street committee level."[98]

The declaration of the state of emergency had a two-fold intention. Politically, the state wanted to smash the forces of resistance and their structures, and restore 'law and order' in the townships by creating space for local state structures to continue to exercise power in the townships. On the other hand, the government needed space to implement, from above, its economic reform strategy of incorporating the black middle class, whilst isolating the 'radicals'. The state targeted areas that were affected by the spate of violence, the so-called oil spots, for this two-fold strategy. Duncan Village was amongst such targeted areas. We shall see below how this strategy was implemented in Duncan Village, and what the consequences were.

We have seen that right at the start of insurrection in Duncan Village, the state made a concession and declared that Duncan Village 'proper' would be retained and upgraded. The new state's thinking on urbanisation was contained in the 1985 President's Council report.[99]. It modified the radical distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' recommended by the 1979 Riekert Commission, recommending that the influx control regulation be scrapped. The new thinking considered a different form of influx control which envisaged "not only a far larger permanent urban population, but also a national

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96   Kruger (1986) op. cit. p 24.
97   New Nation 4 - 10 December 1986.
98   Kruger (1990) op. cit. p 20.
99   For an illuminating analysis of the report, see Hindson D (1986a). Urbanisation and Influx Control. In Work in Progress, 40, February; & (1986b). Creating New Controls. In Work in Progress, 41, April.

population far more differentiated in terms of housing, infrastructure, municipal services and living conditions."[100] In other words, the state was now considering, amongst others, entrenching class differentiation amongst Africans. With regard to existing townships, particularly those close to urban centres, for example Duncan Village, the plan was to 'upgrade' them by improving and maintaining the infrastructure and services at an increased cost. The implication, of course, was that only those earning higher salaries and wages would be in a position to reside in such areas. To ensure that the 'new black middle class' is protected against 'squatters', the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act was amended. Squatting was defined as illegal if it involved illegal occupation of land which in turn did not meet health standards. Those who could not afford to stay in the 'upgraded' townships would be relocated to site and service schemes on the periphery of urban centres.[101] The above provides a context for understanding Minister Heunis' announcement in parliament that some residents of Duncan Village would have to be accommodated elsewhere in South Africa due to overpopulation.[102]

The big question was who would be affected, and how would decisions be arrived at. The East London City Council, through councillor Card, argued that the DVRA should be involved in discussions and decisions as they had emerged as a body with the following of the majority of people in the area.[103] This proposal was rejected by the government, through minister Heunis.[104] The latter's agenda was to boost the community councillors, who they saw as partners in the state's reform strategy, rather than the DVRA, who were seen as 'radicals'. The state thus went ahead and made plans about Duncan Village without consulting the DRVA. If anything, the state went on "without fanfare", and with community councillors in exile, to transform the community council into a town council with full local authority, meaning that community councillors would have the power to levy rents and rates and the power to establish a municipal police force.[105]

It is towards the end of 1986, with over 300 community leaders in detention and/or exile, and the school crisis unresolved, that the state moved towards implementing its plan in

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100 Hindson (1986a) op. cit. p 30.
101 Hindson (1986b) op. cit.; Kruger F (1987). Duncan Village: Community Opposes New Style Forced Removals. In Work in Progress, 46, February and Reintges C (1992). Urban (mis)management? A case study of the effects of orderly urbanisation on Duncan Village. In Smith David M (ed) The Apartheid City and Beyond - urbanisation and social change in South Africa (Johannesburg:Wits University Press).
102 Daily Dispatch 29 August 1986.
103 Daily Dispatch 29 August 1986.
104 See Kruger (1990) op. cit.
105 The Argus 26 August 1986.

Duncan Village. According to Kruger, plans for upgrading were presented by Setplan, a firm of consultants, in April 1986.[106] Their upgrading proposal provided for the demolition of the area known as C Section, an area accommodating some 3 000 families, and to 'upgrade' it. In practice, this would mean whittling down the population of Duncan Village from about 60 000 - 80 000 to about 23 000, by about two thirds of the population.[107] It will be recalled that the C Section was/is the squalid and depressed area of Duncan Village, populated by people who could not afford to buy houses. The proposal was thus in line with the state's agenda to convert Duncan Village, now that they had conceded that it could not be disestablished, into an African middle class area. The poor in the C Section would be relocated to an area not yet decided upon at the time. Further, given the fact that C Section was the most militant and violent section during the uprisings,[108] 'upgrading' it would ensure that the 'tsotsis', militants and radicals, assumed to be emanating from squalid conditions, are removed from Duncan Village, to areas away from the urban centres.

The DVRA, despite the detention of its key members, managed to keep its structures going. According to Kruger, the DVRA, despite "severe repression" had "managed to keep its key structures intact."[109] Yet in 1987, the state had broken the back of the insurrection. The community councillors were back in Duncan Village. By the end of that year, Mayor Makeba was boastful: "We are very pleased with the way in which upgrading is going."[110] To show the extent to which the state had built him into a powerful figure, a reporter, Franz Kruger, made this observation regarding applicants for houses:

> "They may wait for hours, even the whole day, without seeing Makeba, the 'mayor' of Duncan Village. But if he does not come, they will have to return the next day, or the next. For anything from a house to a burial plot, residents have to get his personal approval."[111]

Makeba's position was also strengthened by the introduction of municipal police, or the 'Greenflies', as residents called them. Chops recalls:

106 Kruger (1987) op. cit. p 31.
107 New Nation 4-10 December 1986. See also Reintges op. cit. pp 102-103.
108 See Kruger (1987) op. cit. p 32.
109 Kruger (1987) op. cit. p 33. Kruger, though, does not elaborate on what those "key structures" were, let alone the question of them being "intact".
110 Weekly Mail 18-24 December 1987.
111 Idem.

"After our release from prison, following our arrest in 1986, vigilante groups had been introduced by the government."[112]

There were plans to upgrade the soccer facilities and build a recreation hall.[113] These new possibilities, in the context of repression were not entirely rejected by Duncan Village residents desperate to improve their situation even though they may have lacked enthusiasm for Makeba and the councillors.

Implementing state policy in Duncan Village was not easy, however. Resistance to removal threatened to be fierce. Reintges sums up the situation: "Ridding a place like Duncan Village of its shack dwellers and creating an exclusive middle to upper income environment, while being a pleasant dream for some is, in reality, unattainable.... Shacks will remain prevalent and once the land at Reeston is developed shacks will appear there too."[114]

Politically, despite the fact that the insurrectionary moment was defeated, resistance continued unabated. For example, the biggest trade union federation ever, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, was established in December 1985, during the partial state of emergency. The biggest national youth organisation, the South African Youth Congress was launched 'underground' in 1987, when a nationwide state of emergency had been declared.[115] In 1988, several organisations, including the UDF were restricted. The response of the forces of resistance was to launched a new organisation, the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM). In 1989, a defiance campaign, spearheaded by the MDM was launched. Towards the end of the same year, F.W. de Klerk became state president.

Conclusion

The 1980s witnessed the rise of youth as political actors to an unprecedented extent. It is particularly during the period 1984-1986 that the youth emerged as central in the political and social life of South Africa. This gave to the distinctive youth cultures of the past a superficial unity and a sense of common problems, common struggle, common purpose. In

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112 Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
113 Daily Dispatch 15 SEptember & 14 October 1987.
114 Reintges op. cit. p 105.
115 Seekings J (1993) op. cit.

reality, though, the political era engendered its own crisis. Youth power could not assist (and in some respects disrupted) the effective reconstruction of township power nor could it cope with the problem of 'tsotsis' taking advantage of the power vacuum to cause havoc. In the case of Duncan Village, it is the DVRA, and not youth political organisations that attempted, with some degree of success, to give direction to events as they unfolded from August 1985.

Further, the period between 1985 and 1989 had broadly two phases. The first phase, the insurrection period, from the outbreak of the uprisings in August 1985 to the declaration of the general state of emergency in June 1986, was characterised by the dominance of the youth in the events of the time. The second phase was characterised by attempts by the state to adopt a double pronged approach of repressing opposition whilst at the same time making efforts to incorporate sections of the African population. It is this dual strategy that broke the back of the insurrection. During this second phase, the youth became less and less central in events. The unity displayed during the first phase was beginning to crumble. With the detentions, criminality, according to Peter, "was back in full force".[116] Further, the effects of the reform strategy in the form of housing were beginning to show. The youth in Gompo was, according to Peter, "far behind. They did not attend general meetings."[117]

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116 Interview with Peter 12/1/93.
117 Idem.

CHAPTER 7

THE WORLD OF THE YOUTH RE-VISITED: 1990-92.

De Klerk started the decade of the 1990s in dramatic fashion. In his 2 February 1990 parliament speech, he, inter alia, declared:

> "Our country and all its people have been embroiled in conflict, tensions and violent struggle for decades. It is time for us to break out of the cycle of violence and break through to peace and reconciliation. The silent majority is yearning for this. The youth deserve it".

The speech was delivered against the backdrop of a highly charged and defiant mood by the forces of resistance under the banner of the MDM. His decision to take the initiative and unban political organisations, release political prisoners, particularly Mandela and begin the negotiation process, before being forced to do so, was indeed a brilliant strategic move to break the deadlock. Unlike P.W. Botha, who sought to incorporate the black middle class economically, whilst denying them political rights, de Klerk's strategy was/is to continue to protect the power and privilege of the middle to upper class white minority by incorporating a new black political class which would include leaders from resistance organisations like the ANC, into government. Botha's strategy failed precisely because he refused to work with resistance movements. By starting the negotiation process involving the most popular organisation, the ANC, de Klerk cleverly shifted the terms of the struggle from an insurrection mood characteristic of the mid-1980s in particular, to negotiated solutions.

The form the negotiation process assumed was such that previous forms of struggle, involving mass mobilisation, armed struggle, strikes, boycotts, and so on, were gradually sidelined. A feature of the politics of the 1980s was their grassroots character. We have seen above that the youth was central in the struggles of the 1980s. The shift to the negotiating tables of Codesa had an effect on the political actors. Conspicuous by their absence from the process are the youth. They have been completely marginalised, a process that seems to be frustrating and causing all kinds of confusion and suspicion. The optimism of the 1980s seems to be replaced by pessimism about the future. There was during the 1980s a somewhat blind optimism that Mandela wielded a magic wand that was a panacea for all of South Africa's problems. A year after his release, however, the solution to South Africa's problems was far from being clear. The National Party was still

firmly entrenched in government, unemployment rampant, housing, education and health care ever in crisis, and so on.

The above scenario has undoubtedly affected the mood of the youth. A feature of the youth, particularly from about the end of 1990, when it was becoming clear that the unbanning of political organisations, the release of Mandela and other political leaders was not going to bring about the fundamental changes that many an African youth had imagined, was that the unity of the youth, under the general title of 'comrade' (**iqabane**), started to disintegrate. The youth began to break up into various fairly distinct categories, similar to the position before politics attempted to bring various categories under one umbrella. For example, divisions are beginning to emerge between the better paid working youths, on the one hand, and the lower paid and unemployed on the other. In what follows below, we shall focus on the state of the youth, its nature and composition as at the end of 1992.

The Political Youth

We have seen earlier that the political youth was seriously affected by internal divisions. These divisions, even amongst those sharing a political outlook, persisted throughout the 1980s, at times reaching physical proportions. There was a brief lull during the insurrection when everyone suffered equally in the hands of a ruthless reaction. Attempts were made by the UDF, for example to resolve the differences, to no avail. According to Mcebisi:

> "At one stage the rift assumed physical proportions. You would hear that a member of a youth organisation was discovered in the morning, dead. There is a chap from Duncan Village who was found dead in an area that was a stronghold of the Youth Congress. He had been stabbed. He was known to be outspoken. He was not the only one. Politics was taken up by gangsters, and people were killed."[1]

One of the reasons why these divisions could not be successfully resolved was that some key and influential members of the youth organisations were in exile. With the unbanning of political organisations, and the possibilities of exiles returning home, opportunities arose for resolving the problem. It is only in 1991 that the issue was raised in the open. According to Mcebisi:

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1   Interview with Mcebisi 4/1/92.

for this frustrated and suspicious category is difficult to predict. The frustration, unless addressed, might well explode into anger and destruction.

The Working Youth

From the late 1970's, a growing working class consciousness developed amongst East London black workers. This manifested itself, as we have seen, in the establishment of trade unions. This development, of course, was part of a national development. Working class activities, as shown above, centred around demands for recognition, better working conditions and better wages and salaries. These struggles intensified in the 1980s, at times with significant successes. The youth played a key role in these struggles. By the late 1980s, East London companies like Mercedes Benz of South Africa, Johnson and Johnson, Tek and so on, had established themselves as paying good wages and salaries.

Better wages, better working conditions and upward mobility led to new differentiations among the youth. Whilst some young workers were actively involved in the economic and political struggles, some were less active. Those born and bred in East London, it seems, who had an average or better than average education, for example, standard 8 or matric, fell under the latter category. Improved wages and salaries, whilst greeted as a victory for workers has created an elite category (**izicwinana**) amongst the youth. This is how Andile described them:

> "They are educated up to JC and matric, they are town born, from the location. One tends to find them in sporting activities in the location, activities that are not demanding as such like taking your time attending meetings. They do not like to waste their leisure time with meetings. That is why you find that they are passive in politics. Because they are born and bred in East London, they call themselves **amajitha**, as opposed to 'bumpkin' (**umxhaka**)... They go to selected shebeens, and go around with women."[6]

The initial reaction to de Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech was optimistic. The relaxation of repressive measures made even people who were afraid to discuss politics play prominent roles. This was the case even with the elite group:

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6   Interview with Andile 5/11/90.

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"We were joking about this just now. Now that the ANC has been unbanned, some of them in a very opportunistic way come back in full strength. Because some of them are 'clevers', like, some have gone to school and are educated, so they tend to be in key positions, they are articulate, listen to the radio, read newspapers."[7]

However, as shown above, this was short-lived. The discovery that the National Party had not been defeated, and the ANC were not the conquerors, made this category revert to their old style of living. With the scrapping of the Group Areas Act, amongst other apartheid laws, a significant number of this category is renting flats in the suburbs of East London. Some have bought houses and drive lower middle class cars. Their view is that Duncan Village cannot be changed. They certainly do not see themselves as agents of such change. They are depoliticised but do find a way forward for themselves in personal terms.

Sadly, the above thinking seems to be shared by some of those who were active in the struggles of the 1980s. Their view is that they have played their role in the struggle, and it is time that they start planning their lives and careers. They are despondent and tired. It must be pointed out that it is a pity that places like Duncan Village lose such people at a time when their taxes, rents, rates and skills are and/or will be desperately need to improve such places.[8]

Students

Students seem to be one group that has remained active in their struggles despite the general despondency amongst the youth. The sad thing is that their activism has led to deteriorating standards in schools in the form of a near absence of a 'learning culture', collapse of teacher/staff relations. Evidence of the deteriorating standards can be found in recent matric results.[9]

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7   Idem.
8   A similar point is made by Ramphele. According to her: "Increased population movement is accelerating at two levels. Firstly, the flight of positive role models into better and safer areas in increasing, with serious long-term implications for the townships." Ramphele M (1992). Social Disintegration in the Black Community. In Everatt D and Sisulu E (eds) Black Youth in Crisis - Facing the Future (Johannesburg:Ravan Press), p 25.
9   See the Annual Surveys of Race Relations in South Africa from 1986.

Out of Work and Out of School

We have seen that from about the mid-1970s, more and more schools were built, leading to more and more students exiting from the school system in their hundreds, if not thousands, yearly. This took place against the background of a collapsing economy and shrinking job markets. Further, whatever jobs exist(ed) requir(ed) skilled personnel. Yet, the kind of education that Africans are getting from their Bantu Education schools is not preparing them for the demands of the high tech economy of today. The above has given rise to a category of unemployed, out of school young people, with an average education, for example, high school drop-outs.[10] One even starts to encounter university drop-outs.

At the height of the struggle, it would be common to find this broad category involved in one form of political activity or the other. The latter exclude the youth. This then begs the question: What happens to the out of school, out of work youth who were involved in politics? Today excessive liquor consumption seems to be their alternative. Mcebisi gave this example:

> "These days one finds that even people with JC and Matric are affected. Others are university drop outs. There is a chap who speaks a lot of English (**okhumsha qgitha**). He is a Fort Hare drop out. He'll tell you about people he was together with at school. When you look at him, you realise that if he stopped drinking, he would die. He is finished and cannot reform. There are a number of such people. They are notorious for excessive drinking."[11]

This is a relatively new, but quite distinct category, most probably people who could not cope with the pressures of being without a job. Unlike those who drop out in their early years of schooling, who in the majority of cases end up being 'tsotsis', they seldom degenerate to that level. Mcebisi observed:

> "These people are not 'tsotsis'. They never stabbed; they never stole. A person might not have had an interest in work, another might have left school and sat and did nothing, and ended drinking liquor, speaking English when drunk. They form a

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10   See Hartshorne's categorisation. This category is 'Group C' in terms of his classification. Hartshorne K (1992). Education and Employment. In Everatt D & Sisulu S (eds) <u>Black Youth in Crisis: Facing the Future</u> (Johannesburg:Ravan Press).

11   Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.

category of their own, a category of people who are not working, not at school, but educated."[12]

Because they are not working, they find themselves going to shebeens that are patronised by the 'tsotsis'. They like to assert themselves as a better group by speaking English and comment about issues in newspapers, much to the dislike of the 'tsotsis', who label them 'bumpkins' (**imixhaka**) almost turning on its head the older meaning of the term.

"In shebeens they mix with the 'clevers', who classify them **imixhaka** because they are educated and boring the 'clevers' with English and articles in newspapers."[13]

What is the future of this relatively new category? Those who have not completely lost hope try as desperately as they can to find a job. Some are prepared to take whatever job is available. This view was shared by Chops:

"I would say that they take whatever job they get, for as long as they find something to do and an income to get."[14]

In the 1980s, with the rise and development of mass based organisations some of which received funding from abroad or generated their own funds, like the trade unions, a number of the paid officials of these organisations were recruited from this category.

"There was a full-time post in COSAS, for instance. Trade unions were also interested in them, and recruited them as shop stewards. They were in a much better position than those who dropped out in the early classes, for example, primary school."[15]

However, the capacity of the above organisations to employ (through soft money) the thousands of youth in this category was simply limited. Those employed are merely a drop in an ocean.

Frustration rarely make them resort to criminal activities. Unlike the 'tsotsis', there are possible prospects for them in this world. According to Mcebisi:

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12   Idem.
13   Idem.
14   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
15   Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.

"They are closer to reforming, particularly if they do not entrench themselves in excessive drinking........ They are closer to reform in the sense that they stand a good chance of hearing about bursaries and other opportunities."[16]

The problem of excessive drinking amongst this category of the youth (both male and female), seems widespread. This is also the case with those who were in politics, were detained and upon release saw no point in continuing, either because they are avoiding being re-arrested, or because they are disgruntled. According to Chops:

"But I would say that some resort to consuming large amounts of liquor. Some of them would have been in politics and even detained. But what I notice is that today those people are not involved in the struggle. My view is that this issue needs to be addressed, though I do not know how. It is not funny these days to see a child, not even youth, with a cigarette and a bottle of beer. I don't know whether the 'Boers' did not do this deliberately. I am saying this because you would never find a white child doing that."[17]

The Non-School Going Youth and the Unemployed[18]

Historically, there were two broad categories of those who were not working, and not schooling, having dropped out in the early years of schooling.[19] There were the 'tsotsis', who lived by their wits, robbed and murdered. On the other hand, there were those who were not in formal employment, called **ngxungxus**, who survived by casual jobs at the market and golf course, for example. We have seen how the 'tsotsis' fed off the struggles of the 1980s. With the doldrums of the early 1990s, 'tsotsism' reared its ugly head again. **Ngxungxus**, too, have not disappeared from the scene. If anything, unemployment has in many ways made many a youth to make ends meet. Whereas in the past, youth in this category were seen as resorting to their practice because they were mischievous, in the

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16   Idem.
17   Interview with Chops 20/12/91.
18   Compare with 'Group A' of Hartshorne op. cit.
19   According to Hartshorne's classification, young people between the ages seven to sixteen years make up the biggest group. In his words: "In numbers this is the biggest group: each year one third of a million youngsters are added to the conservative estimate of five to six million non-literate South Africans." By "non-literate" he refers to those who dropped out of school before completing Standard 4. Hartshorne op. cit. p 68.

current period of unemployment, where parents cannot afford anything because they are not working, or only the mother is in the non-formal sector, being a **ngxungxu** is a way of survival. A new term for this category is now in use. They are called, 'survivors' **(zigumbana)**.[20] According to Mcebisi, the term the dilemma of this category:

> "When you ask them about their source of money, words like 'I am surviving' **(ndiyazitabalazela / ndiyazigumbela)** emerge. They refer to themselves as 'survivors' **(zigumbana)** ..... **Ukugumba** means to rely on one's own wits"[21]

Whilst in the majority of cases this category emerges out of poor broken family backgrounds, this is not always the case. Not all children from poor backgrounds end up in this category. At the same time, children from stable homes do sometimes.

> "They were not necessarily from broken families. You will notice that others come from very strict families. The other thing is that East London has got a lot of hawkers, who send their children to school, being single parents. It is thus not accurate that the youth that roams around does so due to the financial background of the family. The environment does play a crucial role."[22]

We have observed something similar to the above when we were focussing on the **Ngxungxus** earlier on. Mcebisi observed that even now, they still have influence on the youth, particularly school going youth.

> "They have an influence even on other youth. They can divert others, even if there are means at home. There is this thing that youngsters simply decide that they don't want to go to school. They earn money as taxi drivers, thus learning the tactics of survival **(ukuzigumbela)** at an early age."[23]

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20   Since the late 1980's and early 1990's, terms like the 'Lost Generation' and 'Marginalised Youth', have gained wide currency. The Joint Enrichment Project adopted the following definition for 'marginalised youth': "(P)eople ... who were typically neither in school nor in employment, and did not exercise responsibility as heads of households." In other words, as Bundy puts things, "young people who cannot easily be integrated into society's educational, economic, social or political institutions - now or in a future democratic South Africa." Bundy C 1992. Introduction. In Everatt D & Sisulu E (eds) <u>Black Youth in Crisis: Facing the Future</u> (Johannesburg:Ravan Press), p 7.
21   Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.
22   Idem.
23   Idem.

Because they earn money, even if irregularly, "most of them are not shabbily dressed".[24]

Like the 'tsotsis', they tend to be marginalised and looked down upon. Both the political youth and society in general, tend to alienate them.[25]

> "At a certain level they were ignored, because they were regarded as 'nothing' (**oongantweni**). You can still hear that term, there are many 'boys' who are called 'outcasts' (**imigewu**). There was a tendency to neglect them, similar to the attitude in the past in trade unions to mineworkers, referring to them as 'people who go home' (**amagoduka**), instead of organising them."[26]

As regards 'tsotsis' in the current period: We have noticed that in the past, roughly up to 1976, there were two possibilities for criminal 'tsotsis' as they were growing older, namely, to reform in the sense of finding work for themselves, or not to reform, ending up in death, prison, being crippled, and so on. Today the poor state of the economy and its tendency to shed workers limits the chances of taking the former path severely.

With the rate of unemployment as high as it is, those that want to reform resort to whatever skills they can market. For example, some might have been imprisoned for lengthy periods of time, during which period of incarceration they might have received training[27] in, say, bricklaying. On the basis of such training, they might enhance their chances of formal employment. For example, Mcebisi recalled that his friend was arrested and convicted for some years. Upon his release, he was a bricklayer. He went for further training in a school in East London, and is now a qualified bricklayer.

Not all, though, end up in formal employment. In most cases, they end up doing casual work ('piece jobs'). These range from working in gardens, hawking, selling their skills, for example, bricklaying. However, non-formal work has its hazards. Two major hurdles seem to block their chances to reform by means of 'piece jobs', namely, the way their history influences how society as such views them; and the influence of their peers who have not necessarily reformed, and possibly do not want to.

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24 Idem.
25 Except for those coming from well to do backgrounds where the parents tirelessly make efforts to 'save' their children.
26 Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.
27 Prisoners refer to this training as **ambag** (author's experiences in prison).

With regard to the latter, a 'tsotsi' could look for 'piece job' in a garden. If they haven't severed links with their peers, they go back to them with whatever might have been earned. They might end up sliding back to their old ways of living.

People's behaviour does at times alienate the criminal element, even though they might be willing to reform. It is the past of the criminal element that makes people suspicious of relying on them and allow them to work in their houses. It becomes worse if the one looking for a job hasn't severed links with their group.

> "The attitude that arises from those who can offer them jobs is: 'It is possible that so and so has been sent by that group because we see him with them...'. This attitude reaches stages where if it were possible to create a world for these people, such an option would be preferred. They are not given piece jobs on the grounds that they will break into people's houses."[28]

Those who are really keen to lead a new life assist hawkers and later become hawkers themselves, or barbers.

However, the tendency of ex-'tsotsis' to avoid steady work continues. They are at times an embarrassment to those who attempt to come to their rescue by organising employment for them. According to Mcebisi:

> "It happens that if you find a job for them, you might persuade some to accepting it. In some cases, they accept a job in order to teach you a lesson, saying something like: 'So and so thinks he is clever, I'll teach him a lesson (**ndizakumkhupha umtshayo**). I'll steal and leave'. And indeed they do exactly that. For them to work is not normal."[29]

Finally, as before, the 'tsotsi' element in Duncan Village remained a loose association of individuals without any organised base, unlike the situation in places like Johannesburg and Cape Town.[30] There are a number of factors that can explain why Duncan Village is

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28 Interview with Mcebisi 31/12/91.
29 Idem.
30 For moving accounts of the rise of youth gangs, which often included 'comrades' of the mid-1980's, in the late 1980's and early 1990's, see Mokwena S (1991). The Era of the Jackrollers: Contextualising the Rise of Youth Gangs in Soweto. Project for the Study of Violence, Seminar Paper No 7. (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand); and (1992). Living on the Wrong Side of the Law. In Everatt D &

different. Firstly, Duncan Village is a relatively small township,[31] and therefore controllable. Secondly, during the state of emergency, some of the 'tsotsis' who joined the struggle were detained. As in Robben Island, political education and planning took place in prison. Upon their release, some of these 'tsotsis' had abandoned their criminal past and became active DVRA members. Their experience in the criminal world was used by the DVRA to fight crime.[32] A resident of Duncan Village confirmed this and stated that it is safer in the C-Section that in Duncan Village, in terms of theft and stabbing. In the C-Section, the ruling law, if caught killing others is: 'An Eye for an Eye', that is, one is killed on the spot, and not reported to the police, "as this would complicate things."[33]

Conclusion

As at the end of 1992, the youth in Duncan Village, as in other black townships in South Africa, was fragmented. This fragmentation becomes all the more conspicuous if viewed against the background of the community of resistance that arose out of the youth's intervention into the political arena. A key demand of the political youth during the struggles of the 1980s was the unbanning of political organisations, particularly the ANC, and the release from prison of political leaders like Nelson Mandela. At the same time as the youth was making the above demands, they were getting to formulate, however incoherently and vaguely, a conception of liberation. They labelled under the impression that their conception was the same as the leaders and organisations they were struggling for. The disintegration of the political youth in particular must be accounted for in terms of despondency arising out of the recognition that the aspirations of the majority of them may not be met by the current negotiation process. The majority of the activists of the 1980s belonged to the fast growing category of unemployed youth with an average education. It is difficult to predict what direction the frustration and suspicion of this category will take.

Sisulu E (eds) Black Youth in Crisis: facing the future (Johannesburg:Ravan Press), for the Johannesburg scene.

31 Mdantsane, for example, has not been as successful as Duncan Village. There are Units, for instance, Unit 7, in Mdantsane that at times were controlled by youth gangs.

32 Interview with some executive members of the DVRA 8/1/93.

33 Interview with Mike 11/1/93.

CONCLUSION.

A widely-held perception is that South Africa is faced with a 'youth crisis'. Some pessimistically refer to today's youth as the Lost Generation or define them in blanket fashion as 'marginalised'. Elements of the crisis seem to be the massive unemployment of the youth, particularly the semi-educated and educated, the high crime rate, (especially by the uneducated youth), and the increasingly deteriorating state of education in black schools, leading to high failure rates and early drop outs. This study has attempted to demonstrate that whilst the above concerns are by and large true, it is dangerous to generalise about them, as is often the case. Three themes emerge out of this study.

A first theme of our study is that throughout the period under investigation, **the youth has been fragmented, composed of various categories.** Thus a rigorous way of understanding the youth, and, above all, the youth crisis, is to disaggregate the youth and try and understanding various components or categories of the youth. When generalisations are made about the youth, for example, its involvement in recent political struggles, it is illuminating to look more closely at exactly which categories were involved, where they originated, their interests and so on. The Lost Generation tag, for instance, fits one section well but it is not appropriate to others.

A second theme in this study is that historical processes have altered the categories into which youth can be divided. The issue is more complicated than a simple traditional/modern dichotomy, moreover. After conquest and for a long period of time, School people found new ways of disciplining and inducting young people into the ways of adults. As the name suggests, the promise and the structure of formal education played a major role here. Red people were able, up to a point, to harmonise the growing dependence on migrant labour with keeping traditional household and neighbourhood hierarchies and bonds in order.

However, in the last fifty years, South Africa and notably the Border Region (East London and its hinterland) have experienced an extremely distorted relationship between the rural economy in rapid and disastrous decay, the urban labour market and the overall needs of the growing population for jobs and wage income. Through its grudging, if not hostile, attitude towards finding space in the urban environment for African people, and especially for the youth, the problems in this relationship have been severely exacerbated by the guiding policies of apartheid. Much resented urban removals were never sufficient to prevent the growth in numbers of the human denizens of Duncan Village even as apartheid policies blocked the development of amenities and services.

The dramatic changes in youth perceptions and self-perceptions in this time period directly reflect the rise of an urban-born and bred generation looking for an identity and struggling against economic and cultural marginalisation. Political struggles have been the backdrop to a breakdown in authority, particularly in generational authority, once so marked a figure in Xhosa society, reflected in crime, in the condition of the schools and in the character of militant action in the township.

A third theme refers back to the material uncovered in Chapter Three. Research indicates that debates following the 1952 riots anticipate current discourse on the youth 'problem' as well as proposals dealing with what was already seen as a youth crisis. It is worthwhile rehearsing this debate again before too glib answers to the crisis are accepted. Can a Peace Corps under different political auspices serve effectively as a youth corps proposal was then set out?

The relatively unfavourable circumstances of the present economy unfortunately suggest that no quick fixes seem to be possible. South Africa is faced with a serious economic crisis and so far prescriptions are rarely tied to massive job creation at a level of low to medium skills. Obvious solutions like improving the educational situation, developing job opportunities and improving township material conditions substantially, all require economic restructuring and financial injections that may or may not be an investment in the future.

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The following interviews have been tape recorded, translated and transcribed by the author. An undertaking was made that the interviewees would be kept anonymous. This undertaking has been adhered to in the text. Subsequently, I discussed with some of the interviewees my wish to record their names. To avoid being linked to the interviews in the text, we agreed that the dates of the interviews will not be recorded next to the interviewee.

N Botha
D Card
M Dyani
Mr Gxasheka
A N Jack
J Jordan
C Mabuya
R Mapipa
V Marawu
N Mbalu
S Mbalu
M Msoki
L L Mtshizana
Mr Pasha
M Pobana
Z Popo
L F Siyo
L Tutu
L Xinwa

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