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Chapter 2
Radical challenges to liberal politics

During the 1960s a liberal worldview had dominated Nusas's largely reactive politics. However, individual voices were on occasion raised in criticism of this. At a 1965 conference in Dar es Salaam, Martin Legassick, a South African student leader, suggested that Nusas should position itself as the student wing of the liberation movement. John Daniel, in his presidential address to Nusas in 1968, noted that Nusas usually 'reacted to … bannings and deportations with protests and then … settled back and waited for the next time we will have to protest.' Nusas, he argued, must become 'more aggressive, positive and militant on the campuses'.[1]

The election of Duncan Innes as Nusas president for 1969 was something of a victory for the more radical elements in the student organsiation. Although black student leaders were becoming increasingly critical of Nusas for what they perceived as its patronising and multi-racial liberalism, Steve Biko had proposed Innes as president at the 1968 congress, and they worked together to keep open lines of communication between Black Consciousness supporters and Nusas.[2]

This uneasy tension between liberalism and radicalism in the anti-apartheid student movement continued into the early 1970s, with radicals and liberals locked in an ongoing contest for influence and ascendancy on the Nusas campuses. Fluctuations in support for these different political approaches were particularly pronounced at Wits University during this time, as student politics lurched from the symbolic and reactive protest criticised by John Daniel to a more radical and proactive confrontation with the issues of society.

Student defiance of the law, such as the actions of the May 1970 demonstration demanding the release of political detainees, represented a new stage in anti-apartheid radicalism on the largely white campuses. But the pendulum soon swung back towards the sporadic protest politics criticised by radical opponents of Nusas's liberal policies and strategies.

These ebbs and flows between radical activism and more traditional and symbolic protest reflected the ongoing challenges for ascendancy between established liberalism and the emerging political left at the universities.

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By the end of the 1960s, the limited space for internal political opposition was largely occupied by liberal and quasi-liberal initiatives and institutions. However, a more radical politics, initially taking root on the university campuses, started to develop within this less-than-fertile environment. Youthful activists began to find their own paths and strategies independently of what had gone before, and their rejection of multi-racialism as a principle and liberalism as a goal initially left them politically adrift in uncharted waters.

This had both its dangers and advantages. On the one hand, there was little guidance from a credible older political generation, thus limiting a younger generation's capacity to build on any collective institutional knowledge passed down through the prism of experience. The successes and failures of earlier political strategies and programmes, the contested decisions to launch various forms of armed and violent struggle and their consequences, disputes between Africanists and non-racialists, nationalists and communists – none of this history was available to the new generation of 1970s political activists.

On the other hand, the absence of established political leadership opened up space for the development of new and uniquely 'internal' initiatives and approaches, largely independent of the organisations that had dominated the politics of the 1950s and first half of the 1960s.

Black Consciousness mounted one of the central challenges to the liberalism of the Nusas-linked campuses in particular, and the small community of political liberals in general. Paula Ensor, a radical activist from the University of Natal and a member of the Nusas executive until her banning in 1973, has described how BC confronted both the form and content of the liberalism espoused by Nusas in the 1960s:

> For many white male student leaders, involvement in SRC and Nusas politics was a stepping stone to an Abe Bailey Scholarship, or a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford. That these scholarships were not open

> to women or blacks caused no greater concern than the fact that Nusas conferences were held on white campuses which obliged blacks to find accommodation elsewhere. Nusas in the late 1960s was largely a debating forum … Liberal ideals were energetically defended, but hunger, oppression and transformation were not placed seriously on the agenda.
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> Biko, and the leadership that formed around him in Saso, identified the moral vacuum within Nusas and challenged the white student body to question itself.[3]

Liberalism was also subject to critique from the evolving forms of Western or new left Marxism. This questioned the relations between apartheid, the state and capitalism, and sought to place the interests of the working class high on the agenda of anti-apartheid struggle. Support for meritocracy and individual rights as the basis for a political programme was increasingly called into question. In their place, the relations between class and race, the 'national' question and socialism, and the place of intellectuals in working-class and multi-class popular organisation began to inform political debate and planning.

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Three figures presided over the changing political landscape on the campuses, and the challenges to liberal thought and activity which this involved. They embodied different, but in some ways complementary, approaches, and represented the intellectual and organisational leadership of this new politics.

Steve Biko was Saso's first president, and the most prominent of the pioneers of Black Consciousness in the late 1960s. In challenging the multi-racialism that dominated internal opposition to apartheid, BC broke the political logjam, smashed a dead-end liberal consensus, and opened the way to new forms of thinking, organisation and action.

Neville Curtis served as Nusas president in 1970 and 1971. His fundamental radicalism guided students on both black and white campuses in their confrontations with apartheid and racism. He led white students in finding progressive responses to the challenge of BC, playing a massive role in constructing a politics of transformation. Curtis gave content to these responses through his tactical flexibility and strategic insight, linking these to solid principles of planning and organisation, which had often been absent in the student movement.

Rick Turner taught political philosophy at the University of Natal from 1970. He guided a generation of student activists to become critical and strategic thinkers, helping them to understand that there were systems of participatory democracy which provided real alternatives to formal and representative democracy. Turner emphasised the centrality of utopian thinking, by means of which the ability to imagine a world based on different social relations became a precondition for transformative politics. He insisted that individuals could make ethical choices, even in authoritarian environments. This inspired a generation to seek new identities, values and ways of acting, based on the rejection of both apartheid and capitalist socio-economic relations.

Turner was a central influence in the development of a body of socialist thought that rejected Soviet Marxism, drew on the varied traditions of Western Marxism and existentialism, and blended these into an analysis that addressed the specifics of South African conditions. This had a strong impact on students and other intellectuals who formed the Wages Commissions in 1971, and who took the first steps to establish the new trade union organisations of the early 1970s.[4]

All three were banned in February 1973. Turner and Biko were killed by state agents in 1977, the one in an assassination, the other assaulted so brutally under security police interrogation that he died from his injuries. Curtis escaped from South Africa in 1974, using the passport of an American acquaintance to board a ship in Cape Town harbour. This enabled him to live longer than Biko and Turner, but he died in 2007 in what had become self-imposed exile, never fully acknowledged for the central role he played in the formation of a new South African politics.

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Criticism of symbolic protest politics intensified on both the Nusas and Saso campuses in the early 1970s. Black Consciousness intellectuals were particularly scathing of what they called 'white liberalism', linking this to privilege, hypocrisy and paternalism. At the same time, the new radicals on the Nusas campuses launched a sustained attack on the edifice of liberal ideology and organisation that dominated opposition politics.

There was, of course, no single liberal orthodoxy. However, the many forms of liberalism associated with opposition to the policies of the National Party government had common elements. There was an assumption that 'Afrikaners' were responsible for apartheid, and that the 'civilising' tendencies of English-speakers might slowly erode the worst aspects of socio-political policy. Liberalism assumed that gradual assimilation of people of colour into English-language culture would have a positive impact on society as a whole, eroding the worst manifestations of racial inequality and prejudice.

Anti-apartheid liberal orthodoxy was based on a value system which included adherence to the rule of law, a belief that charity given to the less fortunate was politically progressive, and that politically motivated violence should always be condemned and rejected. Additionally, there was an insistence on multi-racialism as an act of faith, even when this was based on token incorporation of small numbers of black people into organisations and events. Multi-racial activity was viewed as a political act of opposition in and of itself. Not even the vast disparities in wealth, access to resources, skills, experience and confidence, coupled to geographical separation and differences in language use, were sufficient to challenge this liberal principle.

Liberals had failed to distinguish between multi-racialism and non-racialism. Multi-racialism involved a non-negotiable principle about what constituted desirable forms of organisation and racial representation, and identified challenges to racial segregation as the bedrock of opposition politics. Non-racialism challenged the primacy of race as the basis of identity, economic interests and social explanation. It opened the door to other ways of analysing society, which used the prisms of class, gender, structural inequality, access to resources and economic location to understand the fault lines in society. A non-racial interpretation generated strategies to challenge relations in all those areas, rather than just in the domains of racial inequality and prejudice. Non-racialism also had a view of the future, in which race would cease to be a central element in self-definition and identity. Multi-racialism, by distinction, aimed for a society where people from different racially defined groups would relate on a more equal basis.

Part of the BC challenge to liberalism was based on a long-term vision of non-racialism, and the rejection of multi-racialism and racial categorisation. 'We see a completely non-racial

society,' wrote Biko, 'We don't believe in … guarantees for minority rights, because [that] … implies the recognition of portions of the community on a race basis.'[5]

The challenge to liberal orthodoxy went beyond the questioning of multi-racialism as an immutable principle. Liberal ideology embraced free enterprise, unfettered market forces and economic growth, and asserted that these features of capitalism would inevitably erode apartheid and racially based inequality. Armed with the conceptual framework of Marxism, the new left questioned this, identifying the broadly functional relationship between existing capitalism and the apartheid state, especially in respect of labour recruitment, control and allocation.

Most students attending the almost exclusively white English speaking universities at the beginning of the 1970s would have understood apartheid 'as the consequence of racial ideology imposed on the society by Afrikaner nationalism. The new radicalism insisted that all of white society – in particular English-speaking business – derived benefit from racial domination and so had a stake in its survival.'[6]

Liberals argued that there was an inherent contradiction between capitalist development and apartheid. Radicals understood the relationship as largely symbiotic. The unfettering of free-market capitalist relations might involve superficial changes to the policy and administration of apartheid but would not challenge the core elements of that system. These included migrant labour, low wages, a rural–urban divide based on the maintenance of a reserve army of labour at lowest possible cost, and the use of rural subsistence production to maintain artificially low wages. The contemporary extension of the 'native reserves' into a system of bantustans, with the grinding poverty, destruction of family life and forced population removals associated with 'homeland consolidation', forced the real wages of migrant workers even lower. Employers could pay workers as if they had no dependants, for these were consigned to the bantustans to fend for themselves.

If apartheid and capitalism fed off and strengthened each other,

> this implied that structural change would need to tackle not only society's racial hierarchy, but its social and economic pecking order. This was attractive to radical white students whose interest in moving beyond liberalism was fuelled by the rise of the Black Consciousness movement led by Steve

> Biko, which challenged them to see the collective action of the black majority, not the polite entreaties of white liberals, as the only viable threat to apartheid … And so it helped to provide a context in which white radicals could make sense of their belief that the suburban homes in which they were raised were as much a part of the problem as the Afrikaner nationalism which was blamed for it.[7]

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The understandably cautious liberal agenda of opposition politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a consequence of the destruction of radical politics almost a decade earlier. The banning of the ANC and PAC in 1960 had been followed by massive state repression, which smashed the embryonic underground structures of organisation and resistance. Working-class leadership, especially through the unions affiliated to the South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu), had been similarly crushed through bannings, detentions and imprisonment. Surviving trade union leaders were often incorporated into clandestine political and sabotage activities, weakening worker organisation further. This ushered in a period of political quiescence, underpinned by a combination of economic growth, draconian security actions, high levels of social control, and fear of savage bureaucratic authority.

The conclusion of the Rivonia trial, in which senior ANC, Communist Party (SACP) and Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) leaders were jailed for life, had inaugurated a period of organisational and ideological weakness in the opposition to apartheid, which endured well into the 1970s. The ANC president, Oliver Tambo, acknowledged that, as late as June 1976, the organisation was still 'too weak to take advantage of the situation … We had very few active units inside the country. We had no military presence to speak of. The communication links between ourselves outside the country and the masses of our people were still too slow and weak.'[8]

While there had been a number of brave efforts to intensify resistance to apartheid rule in the second half of the 1960s, most had failed and few, if any, involved efforts to organise and mobilise a mass-based constituency. The politics of the period were largely based on individual initiatives and heroics, symbolic protest founded on liberal notions of the rule of law, and principled multi-racialism.

A 1970 draft ANC strategy proposal acknowledged that organisation within South Africa was 'almost dead'.[9] The few remaining pockets of radical opposition existed in a state of permanent fear. 'A sullen silence descended on black political life, broken only intermittently by the barely audible verbal protests emanating from liberal whites.'[10] Informers seemed to be everywhere. Detention and imprisonment, banning, house arrest and torture at the hands of security police interrogators often awaited those who tried to organise opposition to apartheid outside the confines of white electoral politics. The state had a massive array of administrative weapons to deal with dissenters, including banishment, endorsement out of urban areas, withdrawal of passports and deportation. 'Discussing politics, even amongst close friends, became a high-risk activity … Parents warned their children to avoid trouble with the police … Most Africans felt "an overwhelming sense of the inevitability of white power and … the ethos of a conquered people" prevailed.'[11]

Steve Biko argued that apartheid had succeeded by instilling a sense of fear and defeat in black people. 'The central theme about black society is that it has got elements of a defeated society … This sense of defeat is basically what we are fighting against,' he noted, adding that the 'point about conscientisation and Black Consciousness' was to help people escape from this sense of hopelessness.[12]

Gradually, below the radar, new forms of resistance, opposition politics and organisation began developing from the ashes of these defeats. Students, academics and other intellectuals linked to the university campuses began exploring different ways to respond to the situations they faced. How, they wondered, could they best develop challenges to a society based on capitalist relations of exploitation, apartheid systems of control and repression, and racist institutions and assumptions in all areas of life?

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The organisations of national liberation took some time to realise the significance of the new radicalism developing on both black and white campuses within the country. The Communist Party and the ANC shared some of the assumptions of the liberal interpretation of apartheid society. There was common ground in the understanding of race and the belief that apartheid was an irrational racist policy forced on society by Afrikaner nationalism. They agreed that apartheid was a constraint on capitalist economic development. A critique of these views

implicitly challenged ANC–SACP thinking at the same time as it threatened South African liberals.

The ANC and the Communist Party were initially ambivalent about, and sometimes hostile to, the emergence of Black Consciousness, as were most white liberals. Marxists schooled in the rigours of Soviet communism referred to BC as 'false consciousness', and some within the Alliance argued that BC was a tool of American foreign policy.

Few in the ANC and SACP acknowledged or understood the new dynamics developing within the country during the first half of the 1970s. Nowhere was this more apparent than in their rejection of Black Consciousness and its leadership as a CIA initiative, and in the way in which exiled leadership was caught unawares by the student rebellion of June 1976. Neville Alexander once told Xolela Mangcu of the 'contemptuous' way in which the ANC and SACP's Mac Maharaj viewed the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s, and how he described Biko as an agent of the CIA.[13] It was presumably to counter this sort of hostility that Ben Turok, one of the more independent voices within the ANC, reminded readers in his 1974 booklet that 'Black Consciousness is not false consciousness'.[14]

The ANC initially vacillated between ignoring the new BC initiative and outright hostility to it. This gradually changed, particularly after Thabo Mbeki began discussions with BC-supporting students studying in Swaziland. Eventually Oliver Tambo mandated Mbeki to develop relationships between the ANC and the BC-oriented students' organisation Saso. *Sechaba*, the ANC journal, was encouraged to change its editorial policy of ignoring Saso and its activities on black campuses.

In 1973 Tambo requested Mbeki to draft an input paper on BC for the ANC's national executive. This resulted in an ANC statement recognising that BC formed 'part of the genuine forces of the revolution', although concerns over BC's emphasis on 'national identity' and 'psychological liberation' remained.[15]

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ANC strategy, at least as far as political activity within the country was concerned, concentrated on propaganda and recruitment for military training. Whether by design or default, the effect of this was to subordinate internal legal and semi-legal political

organisation to the imperatives of a military strategy. As a result the ANC became distanced from the most important internal developments in the first half of the 1970s.[16]

Support for the strategies of the banned and exiled organisations generally necessitated acceptance of the use of political violence in the struggle against apartheid. Following the Sharpeville massacre, the banning of the ANC and PAC, and the declaration of a state of emergency, the most committed anti-apartheid groups and individuals endorsed sabotage and armed struggle as the core of political opposition. Some approached the use of violence from within a liberal worldview, seeing acts of sabotage as a means of changing white opinion. Others saw this as a phase towards guerrilla warfare and popular insurrection. The sabotage campaigns were also seen as a means of showing that opposition to apartheid had not been smashed, and that the violence of the state system would inevitably provoke violent reactions.

MK had been formed with a number of goals. Armed propaganda aimed to raise morale, demonstrate that the ANC was still active, and raise the intensity of mass political opposition. Another intention was to force whites in general and the government in particular to make concessions and realise the dangers involved in brutal repression of opposition. Causing substantial damage to the economy and infrastructure, including transport links between cities, might 'bring the government to its senses'. The policy set out in 'Operation Mayibuye', a document which was probably not accepted by MK but which did reflect the views of some of its leadership, saw the sabotage campaign as a prelude to a broader phase of rural guerrilla warfare. Influenced by Castro's seizure of power in Cuba in 1959, MK leaders believed that the sabotage campaign 'would serve as a detonator, provoking a more general uprising against a state they believed to be brittle'.[17]

The first efforts at infiltrating guerrilla fighters into the country, through the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns, were disastrous. Few doubted that the ANC and SACP had more than adequate moral justification for meeting state repression with force. However, those who had argued that the conditions for armed or violent rebellion were not ripe seemed, in retrospect, to have a valid point. By 1969 it was very difficult to claim that the formation of MK and its subsequent actions had been particularly successful in advancing political opposition to apartheid.

Most committed resistance leaders believed that the turn to violence was the only option in developing the struggle against apartheid. This was regardless of whether they were nationalists, non-racialists, communists, radical liberals, Maoists or Trotskyists. There was a broad acceptance that the era of legality had been terminated with the Sharpeville massacre, the state of emergency and the banning of the ANC and the PAC. Some debated whether an acceptance of 'illegality' was strategically identical to the sabotage campaigns of MK and the National Committee of Liberation (NCL), whose sabotage actions predated those of MK. They questioned whether there might be a strategy that combined underground organisation with use of the admittedly limited legal spaces still available for political activity.

A few within the Congress Alliance opposed the formation of MK, arguing that it would destroy whatever political and trade union organisation that still existed, and undermine the conditions for its further development. The objective conditions, they claimed, did not allow for a strategy based on sabotage or guerrilla warfare. Moses Kotane, long-serving general secretary of the Communist Party and a member of the ANC's national executive, was one of the most senior voices raised against the sabotage campaign. He expressed the concern that the premature inauguration of an armed struggle would deprive the ANC, Communist Party and Sactu of many of its best people, and decimate those underground political units still operating. He also warned against underestimating the ferocity of the state's response to sabotage. 'If you throw a stone into the window of a man's house,' Kotane counselled Bram Fischer, 'you must be prepared for him to come out and chase you.'[18]

After a number of relatively successful sabotage actions, individuals within the NCL and the African Resistance Movement (ARM), which grew from it, began questioning whether they should create a 'parallel legal wing that would be involved only in legal political work'. Sabotage, argued Randolph Vigne, 'could only have limited results and some members would be better engaged in "aboveground" work'.[19] Baruch Hirson, a Trotskyist who had been involved in the sabotage campaign, subsequently supported Vigne in this view.[20] Other NCL and ARM recruits who had participated in acts of sabotage, including Eddie Daniels and Hugh Lewin, 'argued that the time had come to stop the sabotage, since it was unclear just what it was achieving'.[21]

Although there were some questioning voices, the frequent conflation of 'illegality' with 'violence' (or sabotage) limited the exploration and development of political strategies. This

was to dominate the approach of the exiled opposition for many years. Developing trade unions, for example, was often viewed as a way to identify and recruit promising individuals for military training, rather than as a means of strengthening working-class interests. A militarist strategy saw the armed struggle as the central mechanism through which the apartheid state would be overthrown. Even when supplemented with international political initiatives – sanctions, boycotts, international pressure, isolation – this undervalued the role of internal politics of both a legal and a clandestine nature.

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Few, if any, of the aims underlying the endorsement of sabotage and armed struggle had been attained by the end of the decade. The government had initiated and then used a massive array of repressive powers, destroying opposition, and breaking any spirit of resistance. The economy was thriving, military power seemed unassailable, and the state's security apparatuses appeared to have opposition to National Party rule controlled. White support for the status quo, even when this included mild criticism of some elements of apartheid, was stronger than ever.

The younger generation of radical political activists developing on the campuses began exploring new strategies that did not prioritise either endorsement or rejection of violence as a political tool. Support for acts of sabotage or military recruitment was no longer the *sine qua non* of political commitment for these groups of students and rarely dominated discussions in the way it had in the 1960s. Nor were the issues of legality and illegality viewed as absolutes or moral principles. Rather, they raised strategic and tactical issues. Where political gains could be achieved through the exploitation of legal spaces, and where the use of those spaces could create new possibilities for political opposition, then legal strategies would be pursued.

This approach differed not only from the combination of a military strategy and international support which guided the ANC–SACP alliance. It was also at variance with a quasi-liberal approach which dominated so much of internal opposition politics at the beginning of the 1970s. For liberals, non-violence and legality expressed through the rule of law were principles usually cast in stone. For the new radicals, however, the issues of legality and

illegality, violence and non-violence, and public and clandestine politics, were less matters of morality and principle than of political strategy and tactics.

Intellectuals and students began to embrace the writings of Frantz Fanon and the Guinea-Bissau revolutionary leader Amilcar Cabral, and tried to reconcile them with the Marxism of a new left. The radicalisation of some Christian organisations, notably in the forms of black and liberation theology, loosened the constraints of conservatism and caution as their adherents began seeking to change their current world, rather than waiting for a deity to provide a better one.

The changing intellectual climate threw out different challenges and conundrums. From the late 1960s onwards, the ideology of Black Consciousness influenced and tested students at tertiary institutions. It was during this period that socialist and Western Marxist analyses took root on the Nusas-affiliated campuses, and when initiatives to facilitate worker organisation grew into a set of trade unions strong enough to confront both employers and the state. In the urban townships, pupils and youths began forming organisations which were to manifest their existence in the rebellions of 1976 and 1977. The dilemmas that had dominated anti-apartheid opposition after Sharpeville were largely absent from these new initiatives. Activists pondered how to strengthen and develop the new and radical politics, rather than anguishing over violence and non-violence, legality and illegality. These issues were not posed as 'either-or' polar opposites, as abstract or moral dilemmas. They were part of broader strategic and tactical considerations, to be assessed in the light of their contribution to an emerging politics.

This involved more than rejection of the political system of apartheid. The inherent radicalism of this approach led to a critique of an economic system based on labour repression, low wages and extreme exploitation, as well as the ideological and cultural forms that expressed and reinforced political and economic power.

For some, this entailed trying to find ways of acting as 'decent' individuals in a thoroughly 'indecent' society. Radical humanism involved efforts to craft a new identity and new ways of being, based on a rejection of existing political, economic and social practices. These initiatives were sometimes linked to radical and liberation theology, as well as the idea of a

'white consciousness', which was presented as one response to the challenges posed by Black Consciousness.[22]

The anti-establishment 'counter-culture' of disaffected youth in North America and Europe also had some resonance among those seeking different ways of being in apartheid South Africa. This emboldened some in this new generation to seek new ways of confronting the existing systems of power, authority and control.

For others, the question of how best to contribute to radical change was faced through the prism of class location and the potential roles students and intellectuals with access to skills and resources could play. Cabral had argued that intellectuals from the petty bourgeoisie could reject the basis of their class position and privilege. Through doing this, they could commit their skills, knowledge and resources to strengthening the revolutionary impetus of the national liberation movements. 'Class suicide by the revolutionary petty-bourgeois leadership', Cabral asserted, 'amounts to listening to its own revolutionary consciousness and the culture of revolution rather than acting on its immediate material interests as a social class. It must sacrifice its class position, privileges, and power through identification with the working masses.'[23]

Variants of this approach could be read into Antonio Gramsci's discussion of the role of traditional and organic intellectuals, and in Georg Lukács's argument that intellectuals were essential to move the working class beyond the narrow confines of 'false consciousness'. When this was blended with Lenin's analysis of the role of the vanguard political party, it created a powerful impetus for students to reassess their role and potential in radical and revolutionary organisation.[24]

These debates within socialist theory and practice were by no means abstract. Emerging radicals in Nusas in general, and at Wits in particular, were developing a notion of 'praxis' loosely based on Lukács's use of the term. This involved a dynamic or interactive (dialectical, in the language of the day) process combining analysis, strategy and action, with each element continually influencing and structuring the others. Debates within socialism and Marxism, especially those concerning the place of class and the role of different sorts of intellectuals in revolution, lay at the centre of strategies to develop a new generation of radical leaders and activists on the Nusas campuses. These also formed the basis for

questioning how best to weaken student adherence to their class- and race-based privilege and power.

This new group of radicals had to discover Marxism and socialism, and the history of opposition in South Africa, largely without access to the collective knowledge and experience of a previous generation. However, their politics were not formed in hostility or opposition to the banned, exiled or inactive organisational traditions of the ANC, PAC, SACP, Sactu or Unity Movement. Rather, the history and strategies of these organisations had to be rediscovered and reinterpreted through a radicalism that was unable to draw on the past consciously or explicitly.

Many of the new radicals were broadly supportive of what they assumed was a left-leaning tradition within the Congress Alliance, represented especially in the Freedom Charter and the agenda of Sactu and the SACP to strengthen working-class interests within the Alliance. In some ways, this view of the Alliance was 'manufactured'. It was as if internal and independent radicalism had 'imagined' a larger, more powerful and wiser set of influences and initiatives under whose umbrella it fell, and which could occupy the enormous gaps in experience and knowledge faced in trying to revive radical politics.

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The new challenges to the existing order began developing with surprising force, despite the political defeats of the 1960s. Just three years into the 1970s, considerable numbers of Natal's workers went on strike against pitifully low wages. In the first three months of 1973 there were at least 160 strikes in Natal, involving over sixty thousand workers.[25] New initiatives to organise African workers into trade unions sprang up in the Transvaal, Natal and Western Cape. The June 1976 pupils' revolt in Soweto soon grew into a widespread youth rebellion, with student leadership calling for a number of well-supported work stayaways.

Ideologically and materially, students from institutions such as the Nusas-affiliated campuses had every reason to limit their generational rebellions and association with a new radicalism. They were linked to the interests of the ruling elite of society through family, opportunity, ideology and the expectation of a privileged future. Sustained and radical opposition to

apartheid threatened their upward mobility towards the pinnacles of economic and social power.

Campus-based opposition to apartheid in the 1960s had consequences for some of its leadership. Government had withdrawn passports from and, in a few cases, banned Nusas leaders. Leadership on the white campuses was also accompanied by opportunities for international travel and prestigious scholarships, and student leaders often moved on to the corporate and professional worlds, where their experience of student government assisted in their steady progress up the professional ladder.

However, the ideological 'glue' which bound most students to the established social order began weakening on the Nusas campuses in the early 1970s. Changes in lifestyle and attitudes, criticism of white liberals from the side of Black Consciousness, socialism and new left Marxism, and the growing radicalism of student action led considerable numbers of students to question their positions of relative privilege. Many began to reject the predictable life and career paths charted for them by parents and the universities they attended, making choices that structured identity and political involvement throughout their adult lives.

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[1] Quoted in Xolela Mangcu, *Biko. A Biography,* Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2012, p. 161.

[2] Ibid., pp. 129, 133.

[3] Quoted in Mangcu, *Biko*, p. 141.

[4] Turner's intellectual importance and influence is well captured in Andrew Nash, 'The moment of Western Marxism in South Africa', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 19 (1), 1999, pp. 68–71.

[5] Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like,* quoted in Xolela Mangcu, *Biko: A Biography*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2012, p. 282.

[6] Steven Friedman, 'From class room to class struggle: radical academics and the rebirth of trade unionism in the 1970s', Paper prepared for a conference on The Durban Moment: Revisiting Politics, Labour, Youth and Resistance in the 1970s, Rhodes University, 21–23 February 2013, p. 2.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Quoted in Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, 'The Soweto Uprising', in South African Democracy Education Trust, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, vol. 2, Unisa Press, Pretoria, 2006, p. 336.

[9] Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*. vol. 5, p. 51.

[10] Ibid., p. 65

[11] Ibid., p. 17.

[12] Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like*, quoted in Xolela Mangcu, *Biko: A Biography*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2012, p. 279.

[13] Mangcu, *Biko*, p. 289.

[14] Ben Turok, *Strategic Problems in South Africa's Liberation Struggle: A Critical Analysis*, LSM Information Centre, Canada, 197?, p. 10.

[15] Background on ANC–BC relations is drawn from Mark Gevisser, *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred,* Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 2007, pp. 314–319.

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[16] See Thomas G. Karis and Gail M. Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882–1990.* Volume 5: *Nadir and Resurgence, 1964–1975*, Unisa Press, Pretoria, 1997, pp. 50–55, for a more detailed discussion of these issues.

[17] Stephen Ellis, *External Mission: The ANC in Exile*, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 2012, p. 37.

[18] Ibid., p. 38.

[19] Letter from Randolph Vigne to Magnus Gunther, 15 December 2002, quoted in Magnus Gunther, 'The National Committee of Liberation (NCL)/African Resistance Movement (ARM)', in South African Democracy Trust, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, vol. 1 *(1960–1970)*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004, p. 239.

[20] Ibid., p. 241.

[21] Ibid., p. 243.

[22] Horst Kleinschmidt (ed.), *White Liberation: A Collection of Essays*, Sprocas 2, Johannesburg, 1972. Also see Eddie Webster, 'Black Consciousness and the White Left', Appendix 2, 'Report on Nusas December Seminar 1973, Friday 30 November – Tuesday 4 December 1973, Elgin, Cape'. Nusas archives, UCT Libraries, A3.1.6.

[23] Tom Meisenhelder, 'Amilcar Cabral's theory of class suicide and revolutionary socialism', *Monthly Review,* 45 (6), November 1993.

[24] Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness,* in particular 'Class consciousness', 'What is Orthodox Marxism?', and 'Reification and the consciousness of the proletariat'; V.I. Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?*; and Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks.*

[25] South African Institute of Race Relations, *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1973*, Johannesburg, 1974, p. 284.