

Bonds Of Unity Consolidated

—George Matlala

June 16, 1982 marks the 6th Anniversary of the Soweto Uprisings. The author of this article discusses the place of the student movement prior to and after Soweto 1976, highlighting the tasks facing the students of our land in this great Year of Unity in Action and for general revolutionary advance.

June 16 is marked by the entire progressive people all over the world as a Day of Solidarity with the people of South Africa as declared by the United Nations. What made this august world body to concern itself about this day so much? The bloody confrontation between the militant students armed with stones and well armed racist South African army and police — in what has become known as Soweto Uprisings — started on this day. Initially this was planned by student organisations to be a peaceful demonstration against the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in African schools. During the course of the protest the police in their brutal fashion opened fire at the students, murdering in cold blood young Hector Peterson — a 13-year-old student! This aroused a strong feeling of indignation among Hector's mates whose reaction was naturally to be a retaliation by every means in their power. The only available weapon was a stone — so it was a stone against the gun. The blood-thirsty racist police spared no effort in draining as much blood as possible from the children, disposessing mothers and the nation of thousands of their sons and daughters.



June 16, 1976 — Students Face Armed Police with Stones and Dustbin Lids.

Although this was the bloodiest confrontation between the racist authorities and students, such open expression of opposition to the apartheid system was not a new phenomenon. Even before the coming into existence of the ANC Youth League, Comrade President O.R. Tambo, Nelson Mandela and others were finally to be expelled from Fort Hare College for organising a boycott of the Students Representative Council which had been deprived of its powers by the authorities.

There was also a student body which was active after the 2nd World War – the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) which united democratic white students and other black students. This body seized to play an effective role when separate tribal universities were introduced by the government, thus basis were created for the formation of an organisation which would mobilise African students. On the 16th of December 1961 the African Students Association (ASA) was publicly launched. The authorities concluded by its launching date (same day as launching of MK) that this organisation was the student wing of the ANC which was by then banned. Consequently all the activists and leaders of this organisation were severely harrassed by the security police and ultimately ASA was also rendered ineffective.

SASO

In 1969 the South African Students Organisation (SASO) was formed. This organisation differed from others before it in that due to an enormous work that had been done by the ANC outside the country, the international community was more enlightened about the plight of the oppressed and particularly the students, it was able to receive funds from abroad. Apart from playing a role of conscientising black people, it tried to consolidate its relationship with the masses by embarking on a number of community projects such as clinics and literacy campaigns. This was to be followed in 1972 by the formation of a broader organisation catering also those who have left school – the Black People's Convention (BPC). Thereafter a number of others like SASM, SSRC followed. Most of these organisations had their shortcomings but nevertheless they played a positive role in conscientizing black people. Some of them like SASM were even more organised, using legal and semi-legal means of struggle. The fact that SASM had learnt to have some of its members organised in underground cells shows that it was by far advanced.

One commendable factor in students' struggle is their realization that their struggle against Bantu Education is part of and inseperable from the overall struggle for national emancipation. Their involvement in commu-

nity struggles such as in the anti-rent hike protests in Potchefstroom where a number of them were shot dead attest to this fact. Koornhof himself knows the experience of tasting his own pill when students protests with the blessing and support of their mothers forced the police to deliver one teargas cannister into the hall where he was to address a meeting in Soweto.

REPUBLIC DAY

During the massive campaign against the fascist Republic Day, our students in conjunction with the rest of the oppressed sections of our people refused to have anything to do with the celebrations, instead they organised protest strikes in which racist flags were burnt and in most cases replaced by the national flag of black, green and gold.

In recent times we have seen a greater number of democratic white youth and students joining the ranks of the oppressed in the struggle against apartheid domination. Just a day after the beginning of the Soweto Uprisings, the Wits University students were out in the streets of Johannesburg, demonstrating against the murder of young blacks. They were joined by black workers and together they were spat at and baton-charged by the racist police.

Since then the Wits University has become a centre of persistent struggle between the so-called right wingers — those diehard racist supporters — and the democratic students. It was here that on the occasion of the

Anti-racist Republic rally a racist South African flag was set on fire, resulting in the rulers passing a parliamentary bill making it punishable by law to burn the racist flag. Very recently we have seen the attempts by the democratic forces of this university to elect Comrade Nelson Mandela as the Wits University Chancellor. This move was opposed by some sections who claimed that this would jeopardise the flow of funds contributed by opulent Openheimers who could not stomach seeing Mandela on that post. Otherwise this convincingly displays identification with the cause for which Nelson Man-



Students Burn the Racist South African Flag.

delata and other political prisoners are incarcerated on the part of progressive students.

Wits has also seen an often appearance of underground materials such as stickers and posters which among others included the sticker with an ANC insignia and a poster written — **SADF — South African Death Force, Out of Angola** and urging white students not to report for military service and to help the draft-dodgers in evading the police.

Down in the Stellenbosch University, where future Afrikaner leaders are moulded we have seen white students booing Botha when he tried to evade a question they had raised of when was Nelson Mandela to be released.

UNITY

The unity of students in various schools and universities across the colour line is worth mentioning. More so in this year declared by our organisation, the ANC, as the Year of Unity in Action. Never before has such a high level of unity been in such manifest. An example of this is clearly seen in the reaction of students at the white Cape Town University and at Natal University in Durban following the arrest of Fort Hare University students. A number of students were detained after an incident involving puppet Sebe who wanted to defy a ban served on him by Fort Hare university students not to attend a graduation ceremony there, which resulted in his car being stoned. He had a 'dramatic' escape similar to his brother and collaborator's narrow escape during his brief encounter with MK combatants in May last year. A solidarity meeting was held at Cape Town University in which various campus organizations participated. The SRC president described the meeting as having been "an historic show of unity." The Durban University organised a Day of Solidarity with Fort Hare Students and a meeting which was addressed by the Branch Secretary of the General Workers Union, Mike Morris.

Outside the classroom we have seen a great improvement in student-worker relations. It has become a tradition that in important students' gatherings trade union leaders are invited to take part. This enables both parties to understand each other, so that they can co-ordinate their actions. This search of unity also stretches to community affairs — in the heroic struggles against rent increases, bus fare hikes, rising cost of living we have seen a constantly growing number of students assuming their position. The relations and the bonds of unity between students and other sections of the population: workers, churchmen, community leaders, businessmen, professionals, etc., are being consolidated with every passing day.

With this year designated by the ANC and its allies to be the Year of Unity in Action, the year of the most powerful offensive our country has ever seen, the tasks of the day are clear. The imperative is to build on the successes already scored and raise the mobilisation of students to a level unprecedented in the history of our struggle, with particular emphasis to the youth and students in the Bantustans. Let us, drawing ever-increasing numbers of students throughout the length and breadth of our country and across the colour line into the struggle for national liberation, strengthen the bonds of unity with the community by acting in concert around all community struggles, be they of immediate community or national interest, e.g. high rents, rising transport fares, forced mass removals, detention without trial, Release Mandela, etc.

Finally we need to swell the ranks of our vanguard fighter, the ANC, and our people's army, Umkhonto We Sizwe and engage the enemy with the language he understands best, that of a gun.

Namibia

THE DEATH TOLL MOUNTS

A Leaflet Distributed Inside South Africa

South Africans are waking up to the fact that SWAPO's armed forces are dealing out death blows to the boer army of occupation in Namibia.

**We have seen combatants inflicting numerous casualties on the racist troops and white farmers (who are in fact part of the army's security network).*

**We have seen combatants operating deep inside Namibia, in the I sumeb area, 250 kilometres from the Angolan border.*

**We have seen the racist generals of the SADF (South African Defence Force) deeply embarrassed by SWAPO's April-May offensive, because*