Résumé
M. Swilling — Les mouvements sociaux urbains et l'apartheid.
Analyse de la relation entre les contradictions inhérentes au système d'apartheid urbain et les mouvements sociaux urbains apparus pour contester ce système. Il s'agit de montrer que, même s'il existe des conditions structurelles, d'importantes déterminations idéologiques et organisationnelles ont, au niveau régional, des conséquences différentes sur la contestation. La démonstration se fonde sur deux grèves générales, l'une au Transvaal en novembre 1984, l'autre dans l'est du Cap en mars 1985. L'analyse des dimensions structurelles, organisationnelles et idéologiques de ces mouvements de masse mène à la conclusion que l'Afrique du Sud est dans une impasse, où aucune des parties n'a les ressources politiques ou militaires nécessaires pour s'assurer de façon décisive l'initiative stratégique.

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Urban Social Movements under Apartheid*

Resistance against apartheid in the 1980s has taken place within national liberation organizations and trade unions that have succeeded in mobilizing the oppressed classes around the demand for a non-racial democratic State and economic transformations. These mass movements have emerged in the urban areas in response to the crisis of economic accumulation and political legitimacy that has gripped the South African social formation since the mid-1970s. Organized on a nation-wide basis by the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the major trade-union federations, they are fundamental challenges to the construction and organization of urban forms under apartheid. At the heart of South African politics lies the struggle over what Castells (1983: 303) calls 'urban meaning', i.e. 'the structural performance assigned as a goal to cities in general (and to a particular city in the inter-urban division of labour) by the conflictive process between historical actors in a given society'.

Instead of discussing the national dimensions of contemporary black politics, this paper will focus on the local and regional dimensions of organization and resistance. To this end I will examine two areas where conflict has been most intense: the Transvaal and the Eastern Cape. In both, bitter struggles in the communities and workplaces over the level of urban subsistence, the fiscal unviability and political illegitimacy of the local State, State violence and education, culminated in stayaways—the South African term for a 'mass strike'.

* The bulk of the material for this article comes from research conducted into the Transvaal and Eastern Cape stayaways by the LABOUR MONITORING GROUP (1985a, 1985b). This is an informal group of academics from the University of the Witwatersrand established during the November stayaway and which has continued to monitor labour and community politics. As a member of the Labour Monitoring Group, I am obviously indebted to the extensive discussions it has had over the last year, but the conclusions reached in this article are my own.

A French—and slightly revised—version of this paper has been published under the title « Grèves de masse et révoltes urbaines » (Les Temps modernes 479-481, 1986: 262-277).

The stayaways occurred in the Transvaal in November 1984, and in the Eastern Cape cities of Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage in March 1985. In both cases, the major social actors were unionized workers, students, township residents and unemployed youths. The unity achieved between these groups generated what Castells (ibid.: 305) defines as an urban social movement: ‘a collective conscious action aimed at the transformation of the institutionalized urban meaning against the logic, interest and values of the dominant class’. The consciousness, struggles and organizational power that engendered these urban social movements effectively reveal the contradictions of the apartheid urban system and the solutions that the oppressed classes are demanding.

Apartheid's Urban System

After the black protest movement was crushed when the African National Congress (ANC) was banned in 1960, the apartheid State rationalized the racist urban system originated during the colonial era. The classic apartheid strategy was predicated on the view that all urbanized Blacks were temporary sojourners in the white urban areas, entitled to be there only as long as their labour power was required by white employers. After that, they were meant to return to their rural homes—the so-called 'homelands'. Because black people did not have the right to live permanently in town, they were denied all other rights: property, trade-union and political rights. It was these conditions that triggered off the 1976 'Soweto revolt'.

The State responded to the 1976 revolts by attempting to reform the urban system. The reformist policy was presented in the Commission of Inquiry into Legislation Affecting the Utilisation of Manpower, chaired by P. J. Riekert. The underlying assumption of the Commission was that it was no longer possible to de-urbanize the urban communities, particularly the middle classes who were seen as potential allies against radical black nationalism. Enthusiastically supported by big capital who wanted a stable pool of semi-skilled labour, the Riekert Commission recommended that urban Blacks be given the right to live permanently in the urban areas. In practice this involved conceding property, trade-union and very limited political rights at local government level.

It was the contradictions arising from the implementation of these reforms that sparked the present wave of protest and generated the contemporary urban social movements. They crystallized around the introduction of new forms of local government in terms of the Black Local Authority Act of 1982. These new apparatuses gave the collaborative black petty bourgeoisie control over elected municipal organs designed to give substance to the policy asserting that Blacks have full urban rights. However, there were two contradictions built into this package.
Firstly, these local forms of representation were not linked up to higher forms of representation at the central State level. This totally deprived them of legitimacy as they were seen as unacceptable substitutes for full political franchise. Consequently, the polls during the 1983 elections for the new bodies were as low as 10-25%. Instead of succeeding, this exercise put the demand for substantive political rights on the agenda and created the space for urban social movements to mobilize around it. The sustained attack of the new local government structures—and of those who participated in them—has led to the virtual destruction of the local State: 34 were introduced in 1983 and 104 were due to be established by 1984; by April 1985, there were only 3 still functioning. In addition, between September 1984 and July 1985 240 black officials resigned from local government bodies because of their lack of legitimacy, and 360 black policemen were forced to flee the townships to avoid attacks on their person and property. This has left many townships ungovernable, with State officials only entering them under protection of the security forces.

Secondly, by recognizing the townships as permanent, the State was suddenly faced with a massive fiscal burden. Providing accommodation capable of defusing the grievances that underlay the 1976 revolts required enormous resources to construct a viable permanent infrastructure: schools, transport networks, houses, electrification and other components of collective consumption that were previously denied to 'temporary' townships. This came at a time when the State was facing an unprecedented fiscal crisis, exacerbated by the onset of a recession that began during the first quarter of 1982. Consequently, the authorities built into the logic of self-government the notion that the townships should be self-financing. This enabled the State to withdraw from the politically explosive task of providing public goods and placed this charge on the new local government bodies. However, because there are no industries or sizeable middle class in the black townships, these new bodies had no viable tax base from which to draw resources. Therefore, they were forced to increase rents and service charges, in some case by 100%. It was this that detonated mass-based movements mobilized around the spiralling costs of urban living: housing, transport, food, education and welfare.

The organizations leading these movements are all affiliated to the UDF, an umbrella body that provides a national co-ordinating centre for its local and regional constituent parts. It has about 400 affiliates and an estimated one and a half million members. Its ideological position is based on the Freedom Charter, the policy document of the ANC drawn up in 1955. Although the Freedom Charter is not a socialist blueprint, it does demand the nationalization of monopolies, widespread welfare improvements, non-racial forms of political representation and other revendications consistent with a 'non-capitalist' Third World future.
In practice, the combined claims relating to urban subsistence and political rights that have emerged during the cut and thrust of recent battles between the State and 'the people' have forced the urban social movements to challenge the very existence of the State perceived as unable to introduce reforms capable of meeting popular aspirations. This desire to substantially transform the entire political economy was reinforced by the burgeoning trade-union movement——another outgrowth of the concession of trade-union rights. That movement, with half a million members, has insisted on the necessity of constructing a working-class politics committed to explicitly socialist goals. The combined threat to the hegemony of the ruling classes of the politicized trade-union movement and the mass-based urban social movements came forcefully to the fore during the stayaways.

Transvaal, November 1984

The successful two-day stayaway in the Transvaal on 5-6 November was not only a major protest against township conditions and apartheid education. It also initiated a new phase of resistance against apartheid, because it was the beginning of united action between organized labour, the student movement, and community organizations.

Compared to previous stayaways, this one was the largest. The Labour Monitoring Group (1985a: 74) calculated that between 300,000 and 800,000 workers did not go to work, and 400,000 students boycotted classes. The organizations involved concur, believing that the action mobilized over one million people.

The sheer scale of the stayaway must be understood in terms of the build-up of conflict in the Transvaal in three key spheres: the townships, schools and factories. Protest and struggle affected all strata of black society in 1984, causing both the State and liberal observers to comment that the situation was worse than during the 1976 Soweto revolt.

In the Transvaal, the unviability of the local government system generated powerful community organizations of two types: the Civics, for residents, which take up subsistence issues like rents, transport and housing; and the Youth Congresses, which tend to mobilize around ideological and political principles, such as the Freedom Charter, political rights and national democracy.

In the factories, despite the recession, there were more strikes than in any year since the Second World War: whereas in 1982 and 1983 there were 394 and 336 strikes respectively, in 1984 there were 469. The number of working days lost increased by 200%, from 124,594 in 1983, to 378,712 in 1984.1 Industrial-relations consultants were concerned

that strikes were lasting longer and involving more workers than previously. One personnel manager remarked prophetically in September 1984: 'We will be lucky if by the end of the year we only have a labour-relations problem' (Swilling 1984).

Contrary to what might have been expected during a recession, workers were using their organized power to resist unjustified retrenchments and unnecessary cuts in wages, as well as to challenge management's power in the workplace with regard to health and safety, arbitrary dismissals and the very organization and running of the production process (Webster 1984: 76-77). The frontiers of management control were pushed back at the point of production. This gave workers a crucial understanding of the advantages of collective action, reinforced by the democratic organizational practices of the independent union movement.

Although certain unions have tended to avoid forming alliances with political organizations on the grounds that this runs the risk of inviting unnecessary State repression, the intense politicization of the black communities in 1984 placed unions under tremendous pressure to involve themselves with the urban social movements. As tensions mounted and the conflict intensified in the Transvaal with the entry of the army into the townships after an uprising in some of the south-western areas of the region in September 1984, these unions were catapulted into a central role in the stayaway.

Beginning in Pretoria in January 1984, during the course of the year school boycotts spread across the Transvaal. By October, there were 200,000 students boycotting classes, primarily in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging area. Throughout the year, the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) presented students' demands to the Department of Education and Training. These included establishment of democratically elected Student Representative Councils (SRCs), abolition of the age limit, abolition of corporal punishment, and an end to sexual abuse of female students. The initiative leading to the November stayaway came from the students, who wanted to mobilize broader social forces in response to a slowing down of their own protest.

Momentum built up in three localized stayaways that took place after September 1984. On 3 September, a successful one was mounted in south-western Transvaal to protest against a R5.90 rent increase—rents in this area were already the highest in the country; it was at least 60% successful, but ended in violence when 31 people lost their lives in clashes with the police; by July 1985, the Vaal residents were still not paying rents, costing the State approximately R10 million. Two weeks later, the Release Mandela Committee (RMC) called a stayaway in Soweto in solidarity with the ongoing struggles in the Vaal. The third stayaway

2. Ibid.
took place in the East Rand town of Kwa Thema on 22 October, at the initiative of the local Parent-Student Committee, made up of ten students and ten unionists (one of whom, Chris Dlamini, was the president of the Federation of South African Trade Unions [FOSATU]); called in support of the school boycott and of the student revendications listed above, it demanded also the removal of security forces from the townships, the release of all detained students, and the resignation of all councillors. It reached a 80% participation. According to Chris Dlamini, its success guaranteed union support for the later call for a wider regional action.

The Stayaway Committee

On 27 October, a crucial and broadly based meeting took place in Johannesburg in response to the original cosas appeal for worker support (see Appendix, p. 377). The meeting was attended by thirty-seven organizations, including representatives of FOSATU, of the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA) and of other unions, together with representatives of Youth Congresses, community organizations, and the RMC. COSAS called on unions to show solidarity with the specific student demands articulated earlier.

All organizations came prepared to take concrete action. The process by which FOSATU representatives reached this decision is illuminating. The federation’s officials were already involved in the Kwa Thema campaign, and there was a groundswell of shop-floor support for student demands—due in part to student solidarity with unions during the boycott of Simba Quix products launched in August to protest against the dismissal of 464 striking workers at this establishment.

At a public meeting in Johannesburg on 7 November, Chris Dlamini explained how dividing lines between student and worker struggles were increasingly becoming blurred; how Student Representative Councils were similar to shop-stewards committees; how age restrictions on students would force them onto the labour market during a period of high unemployment. Furthermore, Dlamini argued, workers are parents who have to finance their children’s education from their own pockets.

The representatives of the thirty-seven organizations present formed a general committee (the Transvaal Regional Stayaway Committee, as it was to be dubbed by the press). A four-member co-ordinating group was elected to handle practical preparations. This core group consisted of Moses Mayekiso of FOSATU, Themba Nontlane of the Municipal and General Workers Union of South Africa (MAGWUSA), Oupa Monareng of the Soweto Youth Congress (SOYCO) and the RMC, and Thami Mali of the RMC—that is two union organizers, one unemployed worker from SOYCO, and one teacher.

The initial pamphlet calling for a stayaway on 5 and 6 November
issued the following demands: democratically elected SRCs; the abolition of corporal punishment; and end to sexual harassment in schools; the withdrawal of security forces from the townships; the release of all detainees; no increase in rents, bus fares or service charges; and the reinstatement of workers dismissed by Simba Quix. The last demand, a workplace issue, indicates the continuity with previous campaigns. In the event, the Simba workers achieved their goal before the action began. The object of the stayaway was to articulate student, worker, and civic grievances, and to put pressure on the State to redress them.

The Labour Monitoring Group conducted a survey to ascertain the extent of the mobilization. The following results were obtained from interviews with 71 unionized factories:

1. These factories gave overwhelming support to the stayaway: 70% of the sample had a participation rate of over 80%.

2. There was no weakening of the movement on day two, as had been anticipated by some observers: 56% of the establishments maintained the same level, 20% weakened, and 24% actually intensified. In the past, extended actions failed: for example, a five-day stayaway called in November 1976 simply petered out.

3. There seems to have been no significant difference in the participation of migrants and township dwellers: in 9 of the 71 establishments surveyed, migrants were a significant proportion of the work force. In all of these factories, there was a 90% participation. Secondary evidence later confirmed these findings.

4. None of the employers interviewed envisaged disciplinary action. The most common response was to deduct wages for the two-day absence. Some employers treated it as paid leave; others, more sympathetic, accepted employees’ accounts of ‘intimidation’ and paid wages in full. There is later evidence of dismissals in smaller and unorganized factories.

According to press reports, there were also some 400,000 students who observed the boycott, 300 schools being completely closed in the Transvaal. The State and capital responded ambiguously. Although the security forces were too thinly spread to forcibly suppress the regional stayaway as they had done in the past, they did mount a counter-attack afterwards. The leaders of the Stayaway Committee were detained and charged under the Internal Security Act, and 5,000 to 6,000 workers were dismissed at Sasol. However, there were indications that senior officials and cabinet ministers had reservations about the Department of Law and Order's hard-line tactics.³ Organized commerce and industry expressed similar reservations after CUSA’s Piroshaw Camay was detained.⁴ They argued that the stayaway should be played down, and that the State


should not overreact because this ‘fuels an ever-increasing cycle of action
and reaction’. In general, they wanted to protect their fragile relation-
ship with the unions, rather than politicize it by overreacting. Further,
after the stayaway, capital and advanced reformers in the State became
much more vocal about the need to accelerate structural reform (Cobbett
et al. 1985). Tony Bloom of the Premier Group went so far as to say that
there ‘is an inherent inevitability about talking to the ANC’.

To sum up, rising tensions in the community were the driving force
behind the stayaway, solidifying the relationships between community,
student and trade-union organizations. The fact that most of these
organizations are mass-based is an important reason why the action was
so large and widespread.

Port Elizabeth–Uitenhage, March 1985

Between 18-22 March, more than 120,000 black workers stayed away
from work in the Port Elizabeth–Uitenhage area for at least one day.
A survey conducted by the Labour Monitoring Group (1985b: 92) found
that 90% of African workers in Port Elizabeth and 36% in Uitenhage
(excluding those not working as a result of short-time) responded. The
Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organization (PEBCO) issued its call in reaction
to the political and economic crisis in the region. It initially identified
the following points: mass retrenchment, the AMCAR-Ford merger, and
increased petrol prices—with the last becoming the final focus of the
stayaway.

All unions not affiliated to the UDF expressed reservations about the
wisdom of striking at that time. In particular, they were concerned that
a call made by an African community organization—PEBCO—would
exclude coloured workers, that a local response to national problems was
likely to be ineffective, that consultation with workers was inadequate;
and there were fears about the consequence of such an action on workers
in smaller, ununionized firms.

These differences over strategy reflect deep divisions, between commu-
nity organizations and trade unions, between coloured and African
workers, and (mainly in Port Elizabeth) between employed and un-
employed workers. These divisions have hampered the development of
an organized working-class politics in the area and intensified what
Harvey (1978: 12) calls ‘the superficial estrangement between working
and living’.

The working class in the Port Elizabeth–Uitenhage region is more or
less equally composed of coloured and African workers. In the 1950s,

the two communities tended to live in racially mixed areas, which provided a basis for joint political action (Lodge 1983: 52-54). This social solidarity was systematically undermined from the late 1950s onwards as the apartheid State imposed its racial blueprint (Labour Monitoring Group 1985b: 88-92): radically separate African and coloured residential areas were created and Coloureds were given better jobs in the workplaces.

By the late 1970s the process was complete in Port Elizabeth but not in Uitenhage. As a result, Langa township, which still faces the threat of removal, is racially mixed, with approximately 3,000 Coloureds out of 42,000 residents. This underlies the divisions between community organizations and trade unions. Whereas the former are based in the African townships, the constituency of the latter consists of both coloured and African factory workers. Consequently, over the years the strategies of the two have not coincided because the unions have insisted that collective actions must include Africans and Coloureds, something the community organizations have not been able to achieve. In time, opposing ideological positions developed to give expression to this division, with the community organizations articulating a radical national democratic ideology that identified 'the community' as the primary vehicle of political mobilization, and the unions practising a hard-line economistic workerism.

The strategies of the two movements have also been shaped by the different problems faced in the factories and townships respectively. The recession has hit the region particularly hard. The main manufacturing sector, the motor industry, declined as demand contracted because of high interest rates, and factories began moving up to the Rand. Consequently, 11,000 motor workers and a further 20,000 in related industries were laid off during the last three years. The National Automobile and Allied Workers Union (NAAWU) estimates that a further 10,000 workers will lose their jobs as a result of the proposed AMCAR-Ford merger. Unemployment also increased as a sequel of the drought, which undermined what little subsistence base there was in the Bantustans and reduced job levels in the white agricultural sector.

The Eastern Cape has a strong union presence, won in a series of bitter factory struggles after 1980. The main concern of unions was to consolidate their position, preserving their hard-won gains on the shop-floor, and seeking to protect as many jobs threatened by retrenchment as possible. In the circumstances, they have tended to weigh up costs of involvement in non-workplace issues extremely carefully. This reinforces a strong tendency in Eastern Cape FOSATU unions to avoid alliances with the community organizations—a particularly orthodox ‘workerist’ position.

In the townships, related problems have produced different effects. With unemployment as high as 56%, and alarming levels of poverty, militant community organizations with a substantial base among the young unemployed have emerged. Towards the end of 1984, the newly elected local authorities tried to increase squatter rentals. The resulting outcry forced them to back down, and led to the rebirth of PEBCO, which had been inactive since 1981. The direct connection between such desperate subsistence struggles and the revival of PEBCO, that has since consolidated its hegemony in the townships, suggests that PEBCO's national democratic discourses strike a ready cord in the mind of these poverty-stricken urban dwellers.

The politicization of the unemployed youth that became a common feature of the 1985 township revolts did not emerge spontaneously. At about the same time that PEBCO was reviving, the Port Elizabeth Youth Congress (PEYCO) and the Uitenhage Youth Congress (UYCO) were formed by small groups of unemployed youths. By the beginning of 1985, these Youth Congresses were mass-based organizations drawing most of their support from the unemployed, particularly from squatter areas. They have well-developed grassroots structures based on street and area committees. Most of their leaders are workers and unemployed youths. Since early 1985 they have succeeded in making the townships 'ungovernable' for the State and have begun to forge their own crude forms of self-government.

The momentum for the March stayaways was built up during the school boycott started in October 1984. Conflict between COSAS and the authorities frequently resulted in running street battles between police and students. This generated an atmosphere of tension and conflict that began to politicize wider sections of the community. In addition, the Youth Congresses were responding to the increasing militancy of the unemployed youth during the first few months of 1985, many of whom were directly confronting the town councillors and black policemen, forcing them to resign or leave the township. Regular mass funerals on the weekends for victims of police violence contributed to an extremely tense climate.

However, unlike in the Transvaal, the unions did not get drawn into these struggles. This cannot be explained in terms of their desire to avoid militant action, since they were and have subsequently engaged in extensive strikes in a number of factories. It is the absence of a working relationship between the unions and the community organizations and

10. These conditions include: 120,000 homeless families; one third of the African population in Port Elizabeth live in shacks; 60%, of the shacks house ten or more people; 20% of the squatters earn R20 a month or less, while the average earns R240 a month; severe shortage of educational, recreational and health facilities (*Labour Monitoring Group* 1985b: 91).
the formers' distrust of the unemployed youths' radical populism that explain unions' reluctance to support the stayaway. As these, however, did not offer an alternative, it not only prevented organized labour from playing a leading role, as happened in the Transvaal, it also meant that burning working-class issues like retrenchments were not articulated.

Despite the fact that the unions did not support the stayaway, the community organizations decided to go it alone. The following actions were called: (1) A 'black weekend' on 16-17 March, when Blacks should not buy goods at white shops. (2) A stayaway in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage on Monday 18th. (3) A stayaway to bury victims of police violence, in Uitenhage on Thursday 21st—a weekday because the local magistrate banned funerals from taking place on the weekend. This was the occasion of the Langa massacre when 43 people who were part of a peaceful march were killed by the police. (4) A stayaway on Friday 22nd in protest against the Langa massacre.

Monitoring the Stayaway

The Labour Monitoring Group conducted a study among employers, union and community organizations in the area to ascertain the dimensions of the stayaway.11

(1) In Port Elizabeth 43% of black workers, and in Uitenhage 62% in the sample are on some form of short-time.

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(2) In Port Elizabeth, 99.5% of the African work force in the commercial sector heeded the call to strike on 16 March, a Saturday morning shopping day. Workers classified as coloured came to work as usual, although many stores closed early. On Monday March 18th, 90% of the African industrial workers stayed away; again, few Coloureds partici-

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11 For Port Elizabeth, the Labour Monitoring Group (1985b: 98) interviewed 50 of the 235 firms listed in the Midland Chamber of Industries Directory; 75% of all firms in Uitenhage were interviewed, along with a sample of employers from the commercial sector.
The situation in Uitenhage was less clear, as 69% of the companies surveyed employed African workers who were not expected to work that day because of some form of short-time. Of those meant to come on the 18th, 36% did not.

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(3) In Uitenhage, a further stayaway was called for 21 March, the anniversary of Sharpeville, so that all members of the community could attend the funerals of people killed by the police the previous weekend. The massacre at Langa ensured that the following day was also a stayaway. Of the African workers, 98% did not go to work on Thursday, and 97% on Friday. Coloured workers' participation reached 16% on Thursday, but dropped to 4% on Friday. Low as this figure may seem—but in certain factories the proportion was much greater—it was nonetheless high in comparison with that in the Port Elizabeth area. This reflects the fact that geographical and organizational divisions are not so clear-cut in Uitenhage.

(4) Of the employers surveyed, 61% in Port Elizabeth and 73% in Uitenhage held discussions with employees before the stayaway. All, regardless of whether they had such discussions or not, followed a policy of 'no work, no pay', as recommended by employers' bodies. In some companies, workers lost their attendance and service bonuses, and a few workers in ununionized firms were dismissed.

(5) In Port Elizabeth 71% and in Uitenhage 69% of the employers predicted that stayaways would continue in the future. Only one thought they would not. 'Stayaways', one of them remarked, 'have become a fact of life'. Most of our informants felt that the solution lay either in quelling the unrest or in employing Coloureds instead of Africans in the future.

The unions' opposition to the stayaway has been interpreted in different ways. There was consensus in community organizations that the action was a resounding success, and that the unions had misjudged the level of support for it amongst workers. In the words of PEYCO's president to the author: 'For the first time we have managed to draw our parents into the struggle'. As far as the unions were concerned, workers partici-
pated because of intimidation. Although it is extremely difficult to ascertain the truth of the matter, there is evidence that there was substantial support in the factories for some sort of collective action, but there is also a feeling that workers feared the consequences of not striking.\footnote{12}

There were also differences about the political objectives. The vice-president of \textit{FOSATU} criticized the stayaway as not being in the interests of the working class. Instead, he argued, it was non-workers who ultimately benefited: white chainstores registered record takings on the Friday before the black weekend; black traders and shebeen owners made a killing during it; taxi drivers did extremely well since there were no buses; and only workers have lost out altogether—they lost a day’s pay, some lost their jobs, and they were left weaker and more divided than before.\footnote{13}

Community organizers judge success in very different terms: the stayaway demonstrated the level of resistance in the townships, increased the power of the community organizations, and satisfied the unemployed youth’s demand for more militant action.

These differences reflect the disharmony between unions and community organizations over the purpose of political action. To the unions, community-based action should not play into the hands of non-working-class interests. Yet, as we saw, they did not provide another plan. This may result from the fact that it is not possible to organize pure working-class politics outside the workplace, especially when unions are preoccupied with defending workers on the shop-floor during a recession.

For the community organizations, there is no real difference between the interests of the community and those of employed workers (many of whom are on short-time in any case). Therefore, they argue, the unions should take the lead from the community. This suggests that the political strategies of the community organizations were being shaped predominantly by the local conditions, in particular by the highly politicized unemployed who bear the brunt of the depressed regional economy (Lodge & Swilling 1986).

This kind of politics, however, runs the risk of intensifying divisions between unemployed and employed workers, especially if it is couched in terms of a populist ideology that does not recognize the leading role of the working class. All this reinforces the traditional ideologically based divisions that have plagued union-community links in the Eastern Cape in recent years.

Significantly, during the stayaways in Uitenhage on 21 and 22 March, there was greater harmony than in Port Elizabeth between community and union organizations as well as between coloured and African workers. This was partly due to the strength of \textit{UYCO}, that, unlike \textit{PEYCO}, has a

\footnote{12} For the claims and counter-claims surrounding these events, see \textit{Pillay 1985}.\footnote{13} \textit{FOSATU Worker News}, 37, May 1985.
substantial base among the older working-class members of the community, and also to the fact that the unions did not oppose these stayaways. Hopefully this will provide the basis for greater unity in the future.

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The Transvaal and Eastern Cape stayaways were dramatic demonstrations of popular power that effectively challenged the apartheid urban system and its ideological framework. The demands articulated on this occasion, which called for the withdrawal of the army from townships, educational reform, political rights and urban change, pose a fundamental threat to the hegemony of the ruling classes.

Castells's conclusions (1983: 304-305) suggest that there could be two outcomes of this process. Firstly, if the ruling classes can mobilize sufficient political and coercive resources to reproduce their dominance, they will attempt to reform the existing urban and regional systems on their own terms and to redefine the ideological meaning of urban existence. Secondly, if the ruling groups fail to implement a coherent and purposive reform programme capable of meeting at least some popular demands, and if the urban social movements can sustain themselves, this could result in a revolutionary transformation of urban existence.

Although neither outcome is a clear possibility, the first appears more likely, given the armed strength of the State and the material and political resources that ruling-class reformers can mobilize. On July 21st, the State responded to the urban social movements by declaring a state of emergency that effectively gives all law-enforcement agencies complete freedom to arrest, search, detain and torture people.14 The objective is to crush the organizational capacities of the opposition movement. The State, however, is systematically combining repression with reforms intended to substantially reconstitute the spatial and material foundations of the urban and regional system (Cobbett et al. 1986). The aim is to grant political rights within a federal framework, abandon traditional homeland policies, and fully integrate urban black communities into multiracial fiscally viable metropolitan governments (the so-called Regional Services Councils).

Although this Bonapartist project may succeed in restructuring South Africa's social relations according to the interests of the ruling classes, it may require an extremely autonomous and authoritarian State that will have to break free from the already limited constitutional and juridical

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14. The Minister of Law and Order released the following figures: 'more than 660' people killed and 'more than 2,400 injured during confrontations with the police between June 1984 and August 1985' (Weekly Mail [Johannesburg], 13 Sept. 1985). Over 10,000 people have been arrested for alleged political offences during the 15 months ending October 1985, and a total of 3,522 have been detained without trial during the state of emergency.
constraints on executive power. However, the political and economic costs of escalating repression to keep the popular forces at bay in order to accomplish this process of ‘reform from above’ are extremely high, possibly even too high. It is this contradiction that will be exploited by the black opposition in the future.

At this stage it is impossible to predict with certainty whether the urban social movements will be able to sustain themselves. However, there are two reasons why the opposition movement may survive the state of emergency. Firstly, the trade unions are still intact. Their strong shop-floor structures have managed to protect crucial organizational capacities that can provide a new generation of activists if State repression succeeds in eliminating the present one. Secondly, the grassroots structures of the community organizations have survived in many areas despite the detention of their leaders. This is most clearly evident in the success of the consumer boycott of white shops that was launched after the state of emergency was declared.

In the final analysis, neither the Bonapartist reformist project of the ruling classes, nor the hegemonic project mounted by the urban social movements have succeeded in gaining the strategic advantage. This stalemate is a crucial determinant of the pace, nature and direction of social change in South Africa. Only when one of these hegemonic projects contrives to mobilize sufficient strategic and political resources to substantially transform existing social forms will the present interregnum be transcended.

University of the Witwatersrand, Department of Political Studies, Johannesburg, October 1981.

APPENDIX

COSAS Appeal for Workers’ Support

Workers, Workers, Build Support for the Students Struggle in the Schools

For many months 1000's and 1000's of us have struggled in the schools. We students united in massive boycotts to fight for our demands:

- **Student Representative Councils (SRCs) in Every School**
- **An End to All Age Restrictions**
- **For the Reinstatement of Every Single Expelled Student**
- **For Free Books and Schooling**
- **For an End to All Corporal Punishment**
- **In Protest Against the New Constitution Which Excludes the Majority of People and is Racist and Anti-Worker.**
LIKE YOU WORKERS: we want democratic committees under our control (SRCs) to fight for our needs.

LIKE YOU WORKERS: we students are prepared to fight all and every dismissal from our schools.

LIKE YOU WORKERS: we defend older students from being thrown out of our schools, just like you defend old workers from being thrown out factories.

LIKE YOU WORKERS demand free overalls and boots so we students demand free books and schooling. And students don't pay for books and schools it is the workers who pay.

JUST AS THE WORKERS fight assaults against the workers in the factories so we students fight against the beatings we get at school.

From Cradock to Pietersburg, from Paarl and Capetown to Vereeniging, from Tembisa, Saulsville, Atteridgeville, Alexandra, Wattville, Katlehong we have come out in our 1000's in mass boycott action.

WORKERS, YOU ARE OUR FATHERS AND MOTHERS, YOU ARE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS. OUR STRUGGLE IN THE SCHOOL IS YOUR STRUGGLE IN THE FACTORIES. WE FIGHT THE SAME BOSS' GOVERNMENT, WE FIGHT THE SAME ENEMY.

Today the boss' government has closed many of our schools. OUR BOYCOTT WEAPON IS NOT STRONG ENOUGH AGAINST OUR COMMON ENEMY, THE BOSSES AND THEIR GOVERNMENT. WORKERS, WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT AND STRENGTH IN THE TRADE UNIONS.

WE STUDENTS WILL NEVER WIN OUR STRUGGLE WITHOUT THE STRENGTH AND SUPPORT FROM THE WORKERS MOVEMENT.

**PREPARE FOR A JOINT MEETING OF STUDENTS AND WORKERS TO DISCUSS CONCRETE SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENTS STRUGGLE**

Workers, we students are ready to help your struggle against the bosses in any way we can. But today we need your support.

Issued by COSAS Transvaal Region.

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