

BLACK UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

THE TOTAL STRATEGY

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The story of African education in South Africa is relatively well known. Many books and articles have been written on the subject. In this article we want to look at some aspects of this problem — black university education. MK cadres are not only the sons and daughters of our people; they are people who are motivated, fighting for a cause, and this includes concern for Black education.

Why then deal only with black university education? It is said that universities provide opportunities for the upward social mobility of limited numbers of »gifted», »ambitious», »aggressive» members of subordinate classes. A degree provides a route out of the working class. The opportunities so provided are limited, but the fact that they exist provides a safety valve which is important for the regime's »total strategy.»

Universities have also been involved in educating the professions which are involved in producing welfare — medicine, education, planning, etc. Welfare problems in South Africa are escalating at an alarming rate. The welfare crisis coincides with the intensification of crises in other areas with mounting and more confrontations with the state, with pressures on wages, with growing social conflict and disintegration, and the escalation of the security forces' demands on state revenues.

Universities do have social obligations but in South Africa they cannot be properly or adequately discharged within the framework of the authoritarian strategy designed to perpetuate apartheid.

TOTAL STRATEGY

What has the above to do with »total strategy»? To answer this question properly let us take a dive into the history of Black university education in South Africa. Talking about Black university education one must distinguish three stages as from the 1950s.

The first stage: this was from the mid-1950s to the end of the 1960s. At this stage state intervention took the form of excluding Blacks from the so-called white or open universities and establishing so-called ethnic universities or bush colleges, mainly in the homelands. That stage corresponded to the development of total segregation — apartheid in its Verwoedian formulation. »Ethnic universities» were to correspond to the political strategy underlying the development of the bantustans. These universities were to train administrators and teachers — the privileged elite in positions of power in the homelands.

The second stage was marked by the system of ministerial exemption formalised in 1971. This permit system was imposed on South Africa's universities

when the Extension of Universities Act of 1959 effectively removed from South Africa's universities their freedom to admit students of their choice. Every Black student had to obtain a permit from the »ethnically relevant« cabinet minister before he was allowed to accept the place offered to him. Permits were granted on the basis of whether the alternative segregated facilities were available to the »race group« of each applicant concerned: African, Coloured and Asian.

My department's policy is that education should stand with both feet in the reserves and have its roots in the spirit and being of Bantu society. There Bantu education must be able to give itself complete expression and there it will be called upon to perform its real service. The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his own community, however, all doors are open . . . Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze.

(Dr H F Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs, Senate, 7 June 1954)

NUMBER OF BLACK STUDENTS

It is worth noting that the number of Black students in White campuses never rose significantly. At the four English-medium universities it rose from 3 203 out of 33 306 in 1979 to 5 101 out of 338 651 in 1982 — an increase

from 9.6 per cent to 13.2%. This means they constituted 4.3 per cent of the total enrolment. The record of these universities as far as Black education is concerned can be gauged from the report that in 1983 the University of Cape Town produced the first African architecture student graduate. He is from Lesotho.

The third stage is marked partly by the proposal to introduce a quota system at the universities. The Universities Amendment Bill of 1983 requires the universities to limit the number of students admitted to courses in accordance with a government-determined quota. The universities are being compelled to become an active instrument in carrying out a policy of racial discrimination in education. There are serious financial implications for universities which fail to implement the new system. This attempt to coerce the universities to toe the line and co-operate with the regime's quota idea, is in fact a form of statutory duress, a legalised blackmail.

The new quota provisions are tied to subsidy provisions — the permit system was not. If a university finds itself unable to implement the mooted quota system, the minister of national education will have the power to modify, reduce or remove the quota.

What we are saying is that each stage has involved an effort by the government to generate a policy for the universities which corresponds to its overall policy for the state as a whole; each continuous with the previous stage, there is a certain degree of provisionality.

TOTAL STRATEGY

Total strategy is not fundamentally a departure from earlier developments. Total strategy is total strategy for the defence of the existing political order. Earlier stages were essentially regulative and coercive, simply concerned with imposing a form of external controls

over universities. Total strategy reflects, in part, an effort to elicit the co-operation and co-option of social and political institutions. There is recognition on the side of the boers that repression alone cannot guarantee the survival of the South African state. This insight was achieved by the military — repeat military — whose business is repression and which has an extremely acute understanding of the limits of repression. In a sense, this means legitimisation of control.

Total strategy means to centralise and rationalise state power and decision-making within a powerful central institution (the executive presidency) and to develop a close collaboration and liaison between state policy-makers and the security forces; it also means to *co-opt particular groups and institutions* into new political structures. There is also the attempt to «depoliticise» — that is not the right term — policy and decision-making arenas by making them inaccessible to popular control and pressure through a variety of devices; for example, through the institution of ethnic parliaments with partial and limited powers, the development of class-biased franchise and delimitation system in local and regional levels. Such devices would enervate and fragment opposition to a powerful and technically competent set of institutions in the central government.

THE OPPRESSED AND EDUCATION

In this article we have assessed Black university education in White universities. This might create a wrong impression that Blacks are fighting for the same education as Whites. Blacks have never wanted the same education as Whites — in its present form. What Blacks want is the improvement of the content of education, a reflection of Black thinking and achievement in the syllabus, a direct say in what is being taught, how much money is being spent and what it is spent on.

Bantu Education is a system designed not by Black educationists and Black parents, but by a White government in which they have no say. Verwoerd's philosophy and motivation — which he enunciated so bluntly — has poisoned the entire system probably beyond repair. Bantu education is closely linked with Black poverty, jobs colour bar — and now «total strategy».

An oppressed people cannot gain control over its own education without first gaining control over the economy of the country, and this depends on the political arrangements within the country. Therefore it becomes clear that any talk about struggle against Bantu education is essentially about political power,

THE DOORS OF LEARNING AND OF CULTURE SHALL BE OPENED!

The government shall discover, develop and encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life;

All cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands;

The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace; Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children;

Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit.

Adult illiteracy shall be ended by a mass state education plan;

Teachers shall have all the rights of other citizens;

The colour bar in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished.



Stone-throwing students of June 16. Now disciplined commanders and commissars of MK.

because unrest will always erupt as long as the demand is not met. A say in the educational decision-making ultimately means a say in political decision-making. This is why the Soweto uprising started off as a reaction to the imposition of the Afrikaans language and developed to be a rejection of the whole system of apartheid. Those stone-throwing students of June 16th are now disciplined commanders and commissars of Umkhonto We Sizwe.

It is important that the students at home know that Umkhonto we Sizwe is fighting for their cause — not only because MK cadres are former students but also because the problems facing the Black students are part of the problems facing the Black community, and the ANC as a national organisation is very much interested in the solution of those problems. In a sense Umkhonto We Sizwe activities — armed struggle — contribute to the solution of the education crisis.

DID YOU KNOW?

Prince Edward Island is a tiny subantarctic islet in the Indian Ocean 1,200 miles off the shores of the South African Republic. Together with Marion Island it forms the Prince Edward Islands Archipelago. Of circular shape (diameter — 5 miles), it rises to 2,370 feet. The Prince Edward Islands were discovered in 1772 by Marion du Fresne who named them Les Iles Froides (Cold Islands). In 1947 the Islands were annexed by the South African Republic.