

Frankly Speaking . . .

*Brickbats and Bouquets

Frank Talk is a very good, unusual journal, which I don't always agree with, but always enjoy. Here is my subscription and a donation to help you continue.

LUMKE MAGAZI

Bede, Queenstown

The political stance of the BCM leads logically to anti-Sovietism. This means that the BCM has no firm allies internationally and is driven straight into a political desert, and ends up as a bunch of political grasshoppers.

BARNEY DHLWATI

Mlungisi Township, Queenstown

When is your next *Frank Talk* coming out – I've been keenly waiting since February 1988!

MICHAEL THEMBA

Glen Residence, Rosebank, Cape Town

Find enclosed herein postal orders for the 1989 subscription and a donation for the wonderful work.

THOMAS MBOBO

Galeshewe, Kimberley

*Biko Lives!

Your lead article in *Frank Talk* Volume 2 was devastating. I made a copy of it and pasted it up on the bulletin board at work with a note: "READ THIS – IT COULD CHANGE YOUR LIFE."

MABANDLA NTOMBODIDI

KwaZakhele, Port Elizabeth

*Principle or Strategy?

In the Editorial of *Frank Talk* Volume 2 you refer to the "principle" of non-

collaboration. The Azanian People's Manifesto also makes "anti-collaboration" a principle. This is an ultra-leftist and dangerous idea. It is possible to use state structures without collaborating: as Lenin says the struggle is not advanced by abstract principles but by an assessment of the concrete conditions facing the working class and their resultant state of consciousness.

KEABLE MOTSHABI

Mamelodi, Pretoria

* Dictatorship of the Black Proletariat

While I was visiting a friend in Mafeking I came across the article "Black Solidarity for a Socialist Azania – an Introduction". I read a few paragraphs and said "This is for me". I spent – and still spend – a long time reading and re-reading this article paragraph by paragraph. Your Staff Writers' views on BC are like a jewel of thought. I am looking forward to the next *Frank Talk*.

REFILOE MOTAUNG

Pomolong Location, QwaQwa

The word "dictatorship" began as a reference to the *dictatura* of the ancient Roman Republic, a constitutional institution which provided for an emergency exercise of power by a trusted citizen for temporary and limited purposes, for six months at the most. Its aim was to preserve the republican *status quo*, it was conceived to be a bulwark in defence of the republic against a foreign foe or internal subversion. Its modern analogue is the institution of martial law or state of siege.

When Marx employed the term "dictatorship", then, the modern aura which makes "dictatorship" a dirty word did not exist. The "dictatorship of the proletariat" refers only to the *rule* of the proletariat as a class.

At the end of the nineteenth century the old and new meanings of "dictatorship" were jostling and overlapping. It was the international campaign against the new Soviet state which fixed the meaning of dictatorship as something anti-democratic, the opposite of control by popular sovereignty.

In no time at all, the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" became a terminological football to be kicked about in the political war over a much more important question: the destiny and character of the Russian Revolution and the workers' Soviet government it had ushered into existence.

While everyone pretended to be debating the meaning of Marx's revolutionary socialism or communism, none of the polemicists were much concerned with what Marx had been talking about when he first wrote the term "dictatorship" down in 1850.

Under Stalin the term "dictatorship" was transmogrified into *nothing* but a code word for a totalitarian dictatorship over the people; it was finally eviscerated of all revolutionary-democratic content. The term "dictatorship of the proletariat" is now only a bureaucratic watchword, and your "Dictatorship of the Black Proletariat" is merely in the same tradition of gutting socialism of its organic enrootment in the mass of people.

JEAN PAUL GAISCOIGNE

Paris, France

In promoting the racial division of the working class, Black Consciousness acts in league with the fascist state. Your article "Black Solidarity for a Socialist Azania: an Introduction" (*Frank Talk* Volume 2) reveals a distorted subjective interpretation of objective reality, arguing that the racial consciousness of the white working class deprives them of their proletarian status.

There is no room in Marxism at all for this argument, based on the inevitability of a certain unchanging consciousness as it is, especially when it comes to the Proletariat which must perform its historic role.

The working class in Azania do not need to be told about their role in creating the wealth of the country – they do that every day. The history of the white workers must be re-written to show how the white working class was duped into believing that it had a vested interest in the white state, white civilization and culture and in the preservation of the white race.

To conscientize, politicize and mobilize Black workers is necessary: to do the same for white workers is urgent. To propagate racist theories is objectively to aid imperialism.

EMILE BEUKES

Kuils River, Cape Town

I was disappointed by the lack of emphasis on the peasantry in your article "Black Solidarity for a Socialist Azania – an Introduction." The agrarian question is an urgent task of the national democratic revolution and one of the ways of denying the necessity for the national democratic revolution is by denying the very existence of the peasantry.

It is no wonder that imperialist-sponsored research organisations like SALDRU (South African Labour and Development Research Unit) at the University of Cape Town have gone to great lengths to prove that no peasantry exists in Azania.

I would like to see a firm commitment to the national democratic revolution. Trotskyism sees only the socialist revolution without the democratic stage. And it is Trotskyism which wants the revolution "to vegetate in its own contradictions and rot away while waiting for the world revolution." (Stalin *Problems of Leninism* Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1976, page 126)

IGNATIUS LEKULENI

Sedibeng, Tembisa

Given the clear strategic importance and social power of South Africa's black workers, it did not surprise me that your article "Black Solidarity for a Socialist Azania: An Introduction" paid lip service to the "hegemony of the Black working class."

While the ANC wants to give South African imperialists a democratic facelift, AZAPO wishes to displace the Oppenheimers with a petty bourgeois elite that aspires to exploit its own proletariat.

We believe that a civil war fought on a purely white vs. black, national basis in South Africa will be a disaster for the oppressed. A Leninist-Trotskyist party in South African must be built in irreconcilable struggle against every kind of nationalism and popular-frontism.

A worker's revolution in South Africa will be the motor force for the liberation of the desperately impoverished black masses throughout Africa. The internationalist Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard must overcome the tremendous political backwardness of the black proletariat which is in inverse relation to its political power. Forward to a multi-racial revolutionary workers party which will reforge the Fourth International!

FRED LUCY

Ann Arbor, USA

Your article "Black Solidarity for a Socialist Azania – an Introduction" posits a naive and essentially authoritarian philosophy of vanguardism. Black Consciousness has nothing in common with the mechanistic "dia-mat" (dialectical materialism) presented in your analysis.

Against the force of the South African state, BC placed the force of a liberatory idea – the creative subjectivity of the Black masses. Far from a psychological exercise, Biko and the founding fathers of BC were speaking of the liberation of the whole person,

a "quest for a new humanity" where the Black person would no longer be thought of as "an extension of a broom or some additional leverage to some machine."

A section of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* was particularly attractive to early BC intellectuals. In Chapter Five, Fanon takes an excerpt from Sartre's *Orphee Noir* which speaks of Black as particular and class as universal. "In fact Negritude appears as a minor term of dialectical progression," writes Sartre. Fanon replied: "I felt that I had been robbed of my last chance . . . He was reminding me that my blackness was only a minor term. In all truth I tell you, my shoulders slipped out of the framework of the world, my feet could no longer feel the touch of the ground. Without a Negro past, without a Negro future, it was impossible for



Тов. Ленин ОЧИЩАЕТ ЗЕМЛЮ ОТ НЕЧИСТИ.

me to live my Negrohood. Not yet white, no longer wholly black, I was damned."

Biko sought a continuation of Fanon's dialectic in South Africa. Your approach, rather than working on the ground set by Biko, tries to engraft the "materialism" of "scientific socialism" into the "idealism" of BC. You simply make class and race synonymous and garnish this with Marxian phraseology.

For you, Black is the substance rather than the subject of revolution. What began as a very new revolutionary

idea in the early 1970s is reduced to little more than an application of Lenin's analysis of Russia in 1902. In *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon says about your vanguard party: "The single party is the modern form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, unmasked, unpainted, unscrupulous and cynical . . . The party leaders behave like common sergeant-majors, frequently reminding the people of the need for 'silence in the ranks' . . . 'Leader': the word comes from the English verb 'to lead', but a frequent French translation is 'to drive'. The driver, the shepherd of the people, no longer exists today. The people are no longer a herd, they do not need to be driven."

The critique of those who have left the BCM that BC is just a passing stage has been taken on board by you when you say that you have passed the "earlier stage" of BC by adding to the philosophy the language of "scientific socialism." BC desperately needs to find a bridge to Marx's humanism: this will help work out the race/class dialectic and the relationship between consciousness and organisation.

RENDANE MADABA

Sibasa, Venda

* For the Record

Taking the cue from your correspondent John Mbeki (*Frank Talk* Volume 2 pg. 51), I would like to reveal the Book of Tutu. Tutu has always insinuated himself within the ranks of the struggle against apartheid, loudly advertising himself as a leading "critic of the government" and "voice of the opposition". But from this position he has always fought desperately to try to put a strait-jacket on the mass struggle and to prevent explosive confrontations with the state or its agents.

Tutu trotted out his credentials as political fireman before the Eloff Commission: "We have been accused of fomenting unrest. We must point out that . . . the Church will always confront evil to work for real reconciliation. But has the Commission ig-

nored the fact that we served as mediator helping to end a long drawn out strike in Cape Town? Have they forgotten my intervention to try to save the life of a policeman at Mr Mxenge's funeral in King Williams Town? Have they forgotten how I tried to stop stone-throwing at Regina Mundi last year? . . . Have they forgotten our attempts to bring peace on the black university campuses and in black schools? . . ." (1983)

The apartheid rulers and the Western imperialists have not ignored Tutu's qualities or his deeds. Official attacks on Tutu serve to keep him on a leash and also to give him "credentials" as an anti-apartheid leader. Their reward for services rendered for Western imperialism was to award Tutu the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo in 1984 – a prize not awarded for services to humanity.

In 1976, Tutu wrote as follows to Prime Minister John Vorster: ". . . I am writing to you, Sir, because I know you to be a loving and caring father and husband, a doting grandfather who has experienced the joys and anguish of family life, its laughter and gaiety, its sorrows and pangs . . . In short I am writing to you as one human person to another human person, gloriously created in the image of the self-same God . . ."

After several windy pages in this vein, Tutu continues: "I write to you, Sir, because, like you, I am deeply committed to real reconciliation with justice for all, and to peaceful change to a more just and open South Africa in which the wonderful riches of our country will be shared more equitably." Tutu tells Vorster of his personal experience with "violence" in black-ruled countries of Africa and insists that he and blacks as a whole "don't want that at all." He explains: ". . . We are aware that politics is the art of the possible. We are ready to accept some meaningful signs . . ."

Just a month after Tutu's letter, the humanoid monster Vorster ordered his thugs to fire into the crowd of youth rebelling in the streets in the Soweto uprisings.

Tutu speaks for the thin film of "non-

whites" who have managed to attain education, position and some economic sops. Apartheid, from the viewpoint of this stratum of people, is an obstacle to their advancement. They chafe under its restrictions and long to feel that burden lift.

At the same time, however, they are genuinely horrified at the prospect of unrestrained black masses shattering the system – in that direction, they see only utter chaos and possible destruction of their puny privileges.

Fear of political forces on all sides, dread of the future and a fervent wish to be rescued somehow from this position – these are the moods that characterize this stratum and define the politics of Archbishop Tutu. He moans that he feels "strangled" from both sides but when push comes to shove he always acts to save the ruling class and to further tighten the noose around the masses.

Tutu's 1976 letter asked Vorster to call a "national convention" made up of leaders of various communities to work towards a compromise political solution, as well as to accept "the urban black as a permanent inhabitant of what is wrongfully called white South Africa" and to repeal the pass laws. This essentially calls for dismantling the formal laws of apartheid and giving the aspirant black bourgeoisie their "fair share" of wealth and power. Tutu also appeals to the rulers to grant him more political chips to work with so he can shore up his rapidly eroding "moderating" influence among sections of the masses and thus help to head off a "disaster". Revolution would be tragic for Tutu and all other reactionaries and lackies.

MOSES NKADIMENG

Lenyenye, Pietersburg

I cannot understand how the BCM can associate with someone like Dr Neville Alexander. Writing as No Sizwe in *One Azania, One Nation* (Zed Press, London, 1979), Alexander says the following about the BCM at pages 130-1, note 79:

". . . (T)he (Black Consciousness)

Movement has served as the happy hunting-ground for all manner of bourgeois opportunism and imperialist machinations. This can only be explained as the result of contradictions arising from the class position of the leadership of the movement and the essentially gradualist strategic conceptions of the dominant tendency until mid-1977. Community projects (such as clinics, hospitals, factories) were organised – with abundant and continuous financial assistance from capitalist-imperialist sources of both South African and other Western origin – in order to ‘conscientise’ the oppressed people and make them ‘self-reliant’. The reformist, accommodationist dangers of such a strategy are all too clear. It is in fact a replica of what the Afrikaans petty-bourgeoisie did with their Reddingsdaadbond and other mutual-aid organisations, except that they used a language-cum-colour criterion, whereas the Black Consciousness Movement uses as its criterion the fact of ‘blackness’. Potentially, the strategy would lead to a similar accommodation with the capitalist system as in the case of the Afrikaner sectionals. Consider the following statement made by one of the founders of the BCM in South Africa: ‘We need to take another look at how best to use our economic power, little as it seems. We must seriously examine the possibility of establishing business co-operatives whose interests shall be ploughed back into community development programmes. We should think along such lines as the “buy black” campaign once suggested in Johannesburg and establish our own banks for the benefit of the community. Organisational development amongst blacks has only been low because we allowed it. Now that we are aware we are on our own it, is more than a duty to fulfil these needs. (Steve Biko ‘Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity’ in Mokgethi Motlhabi (ed.), *Essays in Black Theology* (University Christian Movement, Johannesburg, 1972), p.26. The uncanny echo of the Afrikaner sectionalist movement is too distinct to be missed . . .”

With friends like Neville . . .

PULENG MOETI

Bochabelo Location, Bloemfontein

* The National Question

A major task of the national struggle is to return Azania to the indigenous African people. The African people comprise the overwhelming majority in Azania and is the vanguard force for national liberation. It is their political destiny which is the key aspect of the national struggle.



African is a definite entity while Black is merely a reaction to the concept of white as it relates to the history of our political oppression. Black does have political value: it helps in instilling pride and dignity into our people and in incorporating the so-called Coloured and Asian peoples with the Africans. The Black Consciousness Movement has done a magnificent job in bringing the three groups together on a realistic political basis, something that no other political organisation has been able to attain.

The language of multi-racialism and non-racialism tends to reject the reality of the African entity in the name of non-racial and human values. This is a distortion. The African peoples have been occupying the country for thousands of years. They have a distinct culture, history and tradition, all of which have been denied and negated by the colonialists. Therefore

we are engaged in a national struggle to put right these historical crimes committed against our people.

Living in an African country everybody, whatever his nationality, is an African. And while the vast and overwhelming African majority is brutally oppressed the duty of everybody is to identify with the struggle. That is the highest political morality in Azania today.

The liberation of all in our country is related to the political and social emancipation of the African peoples.

The oppressed African nation is the main force and vehicle of change. And while the oppressed African people repossess their country and assert their leading imprint in all aspects of Azanian life, at the same time they will incorporate all that is best from other civilisations and cultures. In other words Africanism is not only an assertion of the legitimate political, social and cultural rights of the oppressed African nation it incorporates other human values. That is why Sobukwe stated that in Azania it is very possible for a white person to become the Prime Minister of the country. But he will do so as an African living in an African country.

The concept of Blackness can incorporate Africanism. Certainly the BCM has done so. It observes Heroes' Day which was inaugurated by the PAC. The BCM adherent very often thinks as an Africanist. And leads the Indian and so-called Coloured members in the same direction. The BCM takes up very firm anti-colonial positions with regard to the national struggle. But its Africanism needs to be more specifically spelt out.

DABI MAISELA

Harare, Zimbabwe

Too many elements of the leadership of our struggle continue to believe that we are fighting a colonial regime, that South Africa is a colonial country. Even though they often say that the whites will stay on in the

country after liberation, they also see these whites as or behave as though the whites are still "settlers" and "colonialists". If we are really fighting a colonial regime, then we can assume that the general features of anti-colonial wars will apply to our situation. We can among other things assume that decolonisation is inevitable, the colonialists will withdraw to their mother country or countries, colonial authority will transfer power to the anti-colonial forces through a negotiated settlement and a "sole and authentic representative" organisation will unite the nation against the colonial forces.

The reality is that the original settler population cut their links with Europe in the sense that they themselves became "Africans". They became in effect like any other conquering group that imposes itself on and adapts itself to the foreign environment, a ruling caste. We are dealing with a native ruling class (of European origin), not with a foreign ruling group. We are not, in short, dealing with a colonial situation any more. South Africa was the first African colony of Europe to be decolonised via a "negotiated settlement".

South African capitalism has developed along its own peculiar path as a secondary imperialism in league with other imperialisms. While the land question continues to be a central concern of many of the people and the liberation movement, the question of wage exploitation is the main social question in South Africa. The Primary contradiction (not only objectively but in the subjective consciousness of the masses) is that between capital and labour and not between an oppressing white settler-colonial class and an oppressed class of black helots. This latter is a pertinent contradiction, but a secondary one nonetheless. Of course, the fact that this exploitative relationship is experienced in the form of racial discrimination and racial oppression means that a nationalist response remains the dominant consciousness among black people.

It is for the reasons outlined above that I believe your analysis "Black

Solidarity' for a Socialist Azania – an Introduction" is way off beam!

EUGENE SPECKMAN

Eldorado Park, Johannesburg

In the spirit of Pan-Africanism and anti-imperialism we must struggle against the global tyrants of America (Nato) and Russia (the Warsaw Pact). We must also constantly struggle against Marxist (Leninist, Maoist) organisations who want us to subordinate the national liberation struggle to the class struggle. In the case of self-determination of Black people, it is the white "left" who want to determine Black liberation. The Marxists want to pay lip service to the National Question, but in reality they want a national question without nationalism. We must understand Marxism did not create national liberation struggles – national oppression did.

I am we,

KENNY ANDERSON

Pontiac Black Activists League, USA

(Letter shortened – EC)

The attempt that the National Forum makes to merge the working class struggle with the national liberation struggle is sectarianism *par excellence*. It leads to the rejection of the national democratic stage of our struggle, the trivialisation of the National Question and a refusal to move from abstract theory or abstract intellectualism to concrete and living reality. There is a lot that is assumed without being worked for.

The National Forum fails to see the colonial nature of the apartheid state and therefore rejects the idea that the struggle is in essence a national liberation struggle.

Different ethnic groups amongst the nationally oppressed react differently to the separation and hierarchy of racial oppression. We must build up a truly united struggle against national oppression, starting from the realities of separation. Unity has to be built, it has to be fought for.

The vehement critics of ethnicity should remember that Marx showed in 1866 that nihilistic rejection of nationalities could lead to recognition and acceptance of the nationalism of the oppressors. Thus it comes as no surprise that the Forum displays the very ethnicity which it denounces in the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses when it says that whites must work in their own communities.

BILLY SINGH

Toronto, Canada

I was impressed by the clarity of your analysis on South Africa's political economy in "Black Solidarity for a Socialist Azania – an Introduction". You explode the myth that South Africa is some sort of independent formation from which imperialism benefits and underline that *South Africa is part of the apparatus of world imperialism*.

South Africa as a political and economic entity represents an historically specific variant of settler colonialism. Settler colonialism has at least the following key characteristics:

These colonies were found on a series of brutal campaigns and wars to wrest control of land and resources from the indigenous population and required the continuous dispossession and fragmentation of these populations.

Economically, the settler society rested on an alliance between settler capital and foreign capital. Within the colony, a relatively advanced class formation arose on the basis of an emergent capitalist mode of production, dominating and structuring less developed subsistence economies to meet its interests.

Socially, there arose a community of interests within the settler populations. That is to say, social antagonisms among whites were conditioned by and subordinated to the more fundamental antagonism between the settler community and the indigenous populations it subjugated.

The settler state displays extreme rigidity. On the one hand, this is the product of an almost permanent state

of siege vis-a-vis the dominated populations. On the other hand, it is the product of the strategic importance of the settler colony to the metropolitan powers. Secondly, the relative weight of the settler community and its capacity to accumulate wealth creates the possibility of conflict with its metropolitan backer, whose perspective is global rather than regional. Suspicions of betrayal reinforce state rigidity.

Capitalism is no pure economic phenomenon: it is profoundly conditioned by political and ideological structures.

OLABIMTAN AYODEJI

Lagos, Nigeria

*** Black Theology**

The article "Black Theology – Opiate or Material Force?" critically alludes to the theological stances of Reverend Alan Boesak and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. This criticism is all very well, but it worries me that your contributor chooses to remain anonymous "for professional reasons". It seems to me that this is a cloak for sheer self-interest to be protected. Your contributor should not display such cowardice: it makes it difficult for readers to take the views expressed in the article seriously.

STANLEY NTWASA (Rev)

Dobsonville, Johannesburg

Black Theology must promote god-building, god-worship and god-fear. Therefore, it cannot serve revolution: the fetters of capitalism were forged in the anvil of the "opium of the masses" by the missionaries, the god-builders.

All god-building is the fond self-contemplation of the thick-witted philistine, the frail man in the street. It is the dreamy self-humiliation of the vulgar petty bourgeoisie exhausted and in despair.

MAUREEN NKOSI

Thabong, Welkom

The article "Black Theology – Opiate or Material Force?" in *Frank Talk* Volume 2 wrongly suggests that "(i)t

is to be unpardonably revisionist for Black theologians to assume the ability to seize the ideological weapon of the imperialists and unleash with the same the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed." (pg. 39)

The oppressed cannot be deprived of their liberating religious faith and religious thought is not the exclusive possession of the ruling class. The message of the exodus, the story of the cross, and the victory of the risen Christ over the forces of evil are potent forces in their own right, but proclaimed by the oppressed in a situation of crisis they can become such that the gates of hell cannot prevail against them.

While past history weighted on all individuals and social institutions and the church is no exception, churches too can be reborn even when they are grown old (John 3:4).

Leadership of the calibre of Dr Alan Boesak and Archbishop Desmond Tutu who are willing and able to act ecumenically and corporately in opposing the state constitute a major sign of hope within the institutional churches. There is a battle for the soul of the church being waged between the oppressor and the oppressed in South Africa. The revolutionary role of the church depends less on the conscious intentions of religious groups than it does on the objective social conditions in which the message of the church is proclaimed.

MONWABISI MTSHISELWA

KwaNobuhle, Uitenhage

In reading the piece "Black Theology – Opiate or Material Force?" I was strongly reminded of Jean Meslier (1664-1729), a Catholic priest who expressed his strongest wish as abolishing injustice and wretchedness from the world by the expedient (in his own words) of "hanging and

strangling with the bowels of the priests all the nobles and rulers of the earth"!

Meslier advocated atheism as the only outlook consistent with the interests of the majority of mankind in its struggle against the lust for domination of the unscrupulous few. His *Testament* is a compendium of the historical, exegetical, textual and logical objections concerning the essentials of the Christian creed.

Isn't it time that BT followed the atheist priest?

MICHAEL MORRIS

New York, USA

To bring about real and complete liberation from exploitation and oppression, it is necessary to bring



about liberation without gods-liberation from the need to obscure what the world is really about or to seek consolation from a life of seemingly senseless suffering and anguish.

Every religion in the world believes that every other religion is superstition. And they are all correct!

GISELLE DALAIS

Claremont, Cape Town

*** "Miss USSR"**

Did you see the reports and watch the snippets on SATV about the "Miss

USSR" beauty contest in Russia? I always knew this was where *perestroika* was leading (Gorbachev says as much in his book). It shows how male-dominated the Komsomol (sponsor of the pageant, also known as the Young Communist League) is. It's infuriating.

ADELAIDE GUMEDE
Claremont, Durban

* Food as a Political Weapon

Food is a political weapon – Thatcher's crocodile tears for the Ethiopians will not cover the fact that she is implicated in the deaths of millions as she has used those deaths to score political points and starve those peoples into submission. So-called "aid" is a political weapon. Not only is it too little, too late, but it has

many strings attached. Millions starve the world over whilst it is profitable to let food rot in the "food mountains" of the European Economic Community. This present world order is not only "degenerate", it has a passion for death and starvation. It must be annihilated.

DAVID BLACKBEARD
Bristol, England

