

THE TEACHERS' LEAGUE OF SOUTH AFRICA



**“BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS”:  
A REACTIONARY TENDENCY**

**MILDRED POSWA**

Reprinted from “The Educational Journal”

**“BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS”:  
A REACTIONARY TENDENCY**

**MILDRED POSWA**

Reprinted from “The Educational Journal”

## FOREWORD

*From the time that it first appeared in the March, April-May and June 1976 issues of "The Educational Journal", the series on "Black Consciousness" created great interest, and among a much wider readership than only the regular subscribers to the Journal.*

*That this interest has prevailed is clear from the continuing requests for the issues of the Journal containing these articles. And since the supply of these issues was exhausted many years ago we decided to reprint the series in this form.*

Editor, *The Educational Journal*

H. N. KIES

January 1982

## ORIGINS, NATURE AND FALLACIES OF A DOGMA

*“Unlike us, our people are still hung up on this thing of believing that it’s not the system but that it’s the white man who is oppressing them. It takes time and effort to teach people that it is not the white man but it’s the system that oppresses them.”* — Rafael Viera, 1970.

“Black Consciousness” in South Africa refers essentially to the cult affected and popularised by SASO (the South African Students’ Organisation), the BPC (Black Peoples’ Convention) and similar organisations. In this country the phenomenon — which arose during a somewhat grim period — is being increasingly whittled away by broad political recovery. It is losing the plausibility it once had for many young college inmates as discussion and study replace hot-gospelling and posturing. Above all, events and line-ups in Mozambique and Angola have demonstrated that there is much more to the serious processes of liberating than was ever dreamt of in black consciousness or unconsciousness.

But, before examining the South African manifestations, it would be as well to discuss briefly the origins of the movement — “tendency” might be a more accurate description — in the United States, whence it was transported for very specific purposes, a transplantation being attempted by a divergent collection of reactionary interests.

### A. THE USA

#### Failure of “Integration”

It is a well-known fact that formally the civil-rights movements of “black Americans” entered a period of decline with the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and the passing of the Kennedy brothers from the scene. More important, but less well known, however, is the fact that this purportedly integrationist, passive-resistance movement failed to achieve the substance of what it had promised. In fact it gained nothing for the broad strata of the racially oppressed, from desegregation in schools and in housing, from fair employment practices and other such standard platforms of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People) and other civil-rights movements. On the contrary, unemployment among Negroes and Puerto Ricans reached well-nigh depression levels, residential integration led to the almost complete ghettoisation of the non-propertied and non-salaried sub-citizens. Desegregation in schools created for the majority of children the gravest imaginable psychological and learning problems because of the false premises of the policy as executed hitherto.

## **“Black” Identity**

This predictable failure facilitated the emergence and growth of separatist, “ethnic” ideas. The propertied class of “black businessmen” — many of whom had begun to find “room at the top” via the exploitation of their captive ghetto markets — sponsored, promoted, and in every conceivable way encouraged the germination and flourishing of the idea of a specifically “black” identity. Throughout the history of the USA the co-existence of integrationist and separatist ideas among the oppressed descendants of the African slaves has led to the prominence, if not the dominance, of the one or the other tendency at a given time, depending on the successes or failures of the previous period. Since the integrationist movement had by 1965 come up against the apparently immovable obstacle of institutionalised racism, on which (among other things) US Society rests, these leaders of business opted finally for the “black” market. Penetration of the “white” or “non-racial” market had proved to be virtually impossible because of the oligopolistic stranglehold of the giant corporations on the economy as a whole. The “inarticulate major premise” of this class of people was to divert the struggle against exploitation and oppression as such towards a futile struggle against exploitation by so-called white capital.

With the suddenness of a dream come true it was discovered at long last that “black is beautiful”. It was no longer necessary to “try for white” if one wanted to slough off the slave mentality and inferiority complexes, if one wanted to achieve a sense of human dignity. Within months every variation on this theme, ranging from the far right to the pseudo-left, was articulated. “Black” organisations mushroomed, but only a few grew to major status. Though there were these numerous tendencies and though some of these organisations — notably the Black Panther Party — became genuine spokesmen for the ghettoised black proletariat, all of them had this in common: that they insisted on a strategy of “ethnification” of the racially oppressed. That is, these people were to be organised as blacks, not as workers, party members, members of co-operatives, as had been the case before. Caste was to supersede economic or political identification or grouping.

## **Reformism and Conformism**

From the point of view of progressive America, this was the bitter fruit of decades of reformist and conformist policies advocated and implemented by trade unions, co-operatives, and other organisations of wage-earners. The only reason why the ideas of “black business” were able to find ingress among the urban and rural poor blacks was the lamentable failure of the abovementioned organisations to root out racist ideas and practices in their own ranks. And they failed to do this because they refused to accept that only

radical restructuring the US Society could effectively end the institutionalisation of racial prejudice and the practice of racial oppression. The disastrous result was that in the mid-sixties the “non-racial” workers’ organisations found themselves without any vital connection with the ghetto. Hence the undoubted, if short-lived, success of “Black Consciousness” in the USA.

### **The Pluralist Model**

Except in the case of groups such as the Panthers, the Establishment adopted a stance of “benevolent neutrality” towards this new phenomenon. Behind the scenes US Liberals did all in their power to strengthen the “moderates” in the BC (Black Consciousness) movement. For very good reasons. Socially, the US Oligarchy rests on the pluralist conception of a polity composed of various “ethnic groups” such as Italo-Americans, Polish-Americans, Jewish-Americans, WASPS (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants) and such like. This compartmentalisation coincides to a certain degree with waves of immigration from Europe, but the important point is that divisions are maintained for purposes of domination. By fragmenting the working population along “ethnic” lines the oligarchy is better able to prevent a unified consciousness from taking shape. This is undoubtedly an important reason why the US, until recently, has not really experienced nation-wide struggles by the under-privileged.

### **“Afro-Americans”**

Now it is important to realise that until the mid-sixties the descendants of the African slaves — for historical and political reasons — predominantly strove for “integration”. This strategy would have been undermined by any ethnic ideology postulating a “black” identity. This is not to say that such ideas were never articulated. Reference has already been made to the co-existence of these ideas and integrationist ideas. But until the mid-sixties what might generically be called “Garveyism” remained a secondary phenomenon. (Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association, after World War I, marketed a back-to-Africa movement and taught that both God and Christ are black.) From the point of view of the Establishment, the “Afro-Americans” were the largest “ethnic minority” and their refusal to consider themselves as a minority was always fraught with danger since they thereby questioned the validity of the entire pluralist model. The BC movement was, therefore, a heaven-sent development which could only help to reinforce the foundation of the policy of divide and rule. Far from being antagonistic, as they appeared to be, the interests of wealthier “Blacks” (the so-called “black bourgeoisie”, plus sections of the petit bourgeois) and of propertied “Whites” in fact coincided. And the ideology of BC was — paradoxically — the expression of this coincidence of interests.

## **The Black Panthers**

A word about the Black Panther Party. The failure of non-racial organisations which gave expression to the aspirations and interests of the underprivileged and the poor in town and country made it inevitable that the racially oppressed among these classes would be attracted to the apparently militant and dignity-promising programmes and actions of "Black Power". However, the ideologies of these previous organisations, as well as the influence of events in Africa, Asia, Latin-America, produced a leadership (often from among students) which suspected the motives and the integrity of the "official" BC organisations. Of such a kind were Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and Eldridge Cleaver, who came to lead the Black Panther Party. The activities and the policies of this tragic organisation have been well documented. Their attempt to organise the black ghettos, teach the people independence of mind, eradicate the slave mentality, and to serve as catalysts for a general restructuring of US society which would put an end to all communalist divisions and exploitation failed finally. They hoped to channel the poor blacks into the mainstream of the struggle against exploitation and oppression and they seemed to have some chance of succeeding provided they steered clear of communalism and ethnic illusions. The failure of the leadership to accomplish this, together with the dead-endism and confusion of radical protest movements in the USA generally, now delivered the only potentially progressive tendency in the BC movement into the arms of the Establishment. They ceased to function as a political organisation and the people are back in the political depression of the mid-fifties. The activities and utterances of some of their former leaders are little short of contemptible.

## **Decline of "Black Power"**

"Black Power" has become powerless to serve as the catalyst that people like Stokely Carmichael hoped it would. This is the fruit of the lack of a scientifically-based social analysis — the result of illusions about caste. They failed to recognise the indispensable precondition for the emancipation of the racially oppressed in the USA, which is that the struggle of the oppressed, to be successful, must merge with the general struggle against the oligarchic order in that country. Consequently, the BC movement as a whole is destined to become another conformist episode. It is bound to become a consumerist movement providing the ideological rationale for firms catering for "Afro-styles", "black music", "black theology" and other such cults, gimmicks and commodities. It may for some while still give the appearance of militant opposition while in reality constituting a necessary and even a vital aspect of the Establishment in a process of continuing accommodation.

## B. SOUTH AFRICA

### Fragmentation and Domination

In South Africa the case is not at all very different. However, because of historical and social differences between the two polities, the dangers of adopting the ideology of "Black Consciousness" here are so much more reactionary in their implications. Here the utilisation and re-processing by the rulers of original tribal differences and the creation of colour-caste divisions have served the same purpose of fragmenting the labouring millions in the interest of those who live upon the fruits. The development of a unified consciousness has been systematically obstructed and prevented so that the real origins of racial oppression and exploitation should remain obscure to the politically oppressed and economically exploited people. The undoubted success of the broad movement for liberty in counteracting these strategies of the rulers has compelled the present rulers to adopt or support the Bantustan policy of illusionary "independence" for so-called nation-states. They hope to seal off permanently from one another the progressive forces in our society by blinding them with the hallucinations of bogus "nationalisms". To effect this, they are prepared to partition the country, knowing that as the dominant economic power in the sub-continent "White" South Africa will at all times control the real sources of power and authority in its satellite states. Wittingly or unwittingly the exponents of "Black Consciousness" are in fact facilitating the implementation of this reactionary scheme, though few would for one moment question the fact that probably a majority of persons who used to pay allegiance to BC and some of those who still do intend the very opposite.

### Breakaway from Liberals?

It is significant that the BC movement in South Africa arose as breakaway or ostensibly breakaway groups from Liberal bodies. We refer, of course, to its gestation in the University Christian Movement and in Nusas. For, unless the contrary should be demonstrably clear, it must be assumed (and it can be proved) that the BC movement has retained the basic Liberal direction in spite of a change in terminology.

The Liberal connection is by definition an Imperial connection and until that link is severed the BC movement viewed as a whole can only serve to channel the ideas of a powerful exploitative oligarchy into the stream of the political consciousness of the non-citizen mass. And the fact is that by the early 'sixties the oppressed slowly and haltingly began to understand who their real enemies are, after having trodden a long, long path full of bitter detours. A movement which — intentionally or not — compels the oppressed to retreat along the same path is performing a reactionary function.

Let there be no misunderstanding. One speaks of the BC move-



ment, well knowing that there is no formal movement by this name. One is also aware that very many — especially of the younger people — associated with this “movement” would shrink back from the abyss of racism implied by the popular interpretation of its ideology if they knew or took the trouble to learn the history of the new road which the liberation movement in South Africa decided on in the early 'forties. One can but hope that such people, in the light of the practical lessons being taught them almost daily, internally and elsewhere, will cast off the irritation and bitterness they have so often shown when some of their cherished articles of faith have been examined, questioned or condemned.

### Three Factors

Concerning the transplantation of BC to South African soil, it is important to understand the following factors:

- (a) That the ideas of BC were first advocated by students of the oppressed communities who had for almost a decade been attending tribal colleges. Hence they were attracted to these ideas because they seemed to hold the promise of a dignity which these institutions had by definition been incapable of imparting to the students. Many, if not most, of them also believed that the ideas of BC could negate the arbitrary attempt to “retribalise” the oppressed communities and could cut off the struggle of the oppressed from the apparent liberal leadership under which it had once again come as the result of the very grim period forced upon the broad liberatory movement from the early 'sixties onwards.
- (b) That none (one assumes in their favour) of the students concerned perceived at the beginning that the uncritical acceptance of the ideas of BC could mean the blunting of the tools of political analysis and action which had been forged and sharpened in decades of bitter and desperate struggle. By now, however, it should be increasingly clear that the transplantation of this movement in the form in which it was accepted represented a decided retrogression from the point where politically conscious people well understood the inevitability of caste solidarity in the South African context, while nonetheless laying bare in their analysis (and in the action which flowed from this) the real sources of political and historical motion in this country.
- (c) That the Moeranes and their ilk helped to father the movement, thus limiting it *ab ovo* within the confines of reformist politics well suited to liberals and other reactionaries of all pigmentations. And well suited, at a later stage, to the hot courtship period of “dialogue” and “détente”. If elements in BC have now in certain respects and in certain circumstances and instances been forced beyond these limits, this has occur-

red essentially because of the dynamics of the present situation in Southern Africa. And not because of a clear-sighted strategy on the part of the leadership — as apologists attempt to rationalise while retreating from emotive shibboleths.

## Impact

We need not dispute the fact that the BC movement in South Africa at one period seemed to be making something of an impact, however superficial or modish, on students at Bush Colleges and, to a lesser extent, on the urban youth in certain cities. It was able to impinge episodically and very peripherally on the day-to-day struggles of labourers in certain parts of the country, albeit **after** they had already gone on strike against conditions which were, even officially, admitted to be intolerable. There are two basic reasons for the relative success of the tendency:

- (a) The political recession created by the cataclysm of the early 'sixties made it possible for any group which was apparently opposed to the Colour Bar and which demanded full citizenship rights to assume a musculature for which it lacked the appropriate skeleton. The quintennial celebration of the "Labour" Party in the Coloured Representative Council of its ostensible victory at the "polls" because of its "anti-Apartheid stance" (and it was and is no more than a stance!) is to be explained in this way. Precisely because some spokesman in the BC movement stressed at the outset that it intended to work outside the institutional framework of the Bantustans, it appealed to the dormant political consciousness of an intimidated people;
- (b) From the very beginning the more discerning Liberals at home — in the Church particularly but not exclusively — tried to inspan the BC Movement in their family quarrel with the National Party and the **Broederbond**. One of the unending regularities of South African history in the 20th century (i.e. ever since Hertzog broke out of the Botha-Smuts embrace) has been the depressing sight of incipient protest movements being dissipated by the fact that their "leaders", instead of prosecuting a consistent struggle against the Colour Bar and the sources of racial oppression and exploitation, tie such movements to the apron-strings of so-called Liberals in the latter's attempt to regain political control from the Afrikaner electorate. Some of the most militant and promising struggles of the oppressed have been defeated and some of their most upright leaders have been prostituted in this way. And in this instance it has been grimly ironic to see naive BC youth being corrupted by Liberals who have helped them, financially and otherwise, to shadowbox grotesquely selective Liberal targets.

## Strategies of Rulers

But it should be appreciated that on this occasion the Liberal game has been played in a different political situation inside the ruling camp. After the Verwoerd era an important shift took place within the Nationalist laager. And in consequence of this Vorster today represents not just farmers, teachers, civil servants and the labour aristocracy. He represents also the decisive interest of Afrikaans-orientated (and to an increasing extent all) secondary industry, agricultural industry, and finance. Indeed, the ghost of the Anglo-Boer War has been laid (and is allowed Hamlet-like out of its sepulchre only on certain "public" holidays). This is the reason why there seemed to be confusion initially in the ranks of the governing classes about what BC really was and how it was to be treated. Let us examine this question in more detail.

## The National Party

The National Party attempted at the beginning to harness the BC movement to the ox-wagon of separate "multi-national" development. It felt entitled to do so both on formal and on historical grounds. Superficially — if one ignored certain non-tribal and anti-tribal flourishes and extravagances — the exponents of BC were saying the same thing as the ruling party was saying. Historically, these very exponents had been incubated in the Bush broiler-houses established from 1959-60 as the logical extension of Eiselen-De Vos Malan schooling. Vorster's grand strategy for Southern Africa consists of the attempt to create a class of satellite black capitalists ruling over client "nation-states" and exploiting (as very junior partners of South African and foreign capital) the landless peasantry and the ghettoised black workers of this country. If, therefore, his stooge-chiefs and Chief Executive Officers could place themselves at the head of this movement it could well serve to persuade the recalcitrant urban oppressed to make their peace with the system which, for more than a quarter century, they have been taught to reject and to abhor. It is not so very unusual for rulers to substitute power for an understanding of the driving forces of history. As Tacitus said of certain Germanic tribes: "They create a desert and call it peace." The **Broederbond** failed to understand that their apparent erasure of the liberatory movement did not mean that they had before them a clean sheet. The direction in which the consciousness of the oppressed majority had tended to develop was not to be deflected thus easily.

## The Liberals

The Liberals (Progs, Churchmen and Nusas elements), on the other hand, believe that the **Broederbond's** variant of divide-and-rule is suicidal or, at least, inevitably counter-productive. Precisely because the creation of bogus nationalities and merely conceptual "states" involves massive repression of the traditional liberation

organisations; precisely because political decentralisation could yet prove to be the hole in the dyke of one of Imperialism's most secure fortresses. And also because the National Party's continued reliance on the White labour aristocracy involves the short-term frustration of the aspirations of the lower middle class and the aspirant capitalist class among the unfranchised.

So the Liberals punted a "pluralist" rather than a "multi-national" model. In other words, communalist ideologies were to be encouraged (always properly motivated by means of "in-depth" research, of course); the ethos of "ethnic groups" would become the first commandment among the peoples of South Africa. Thus any movement, no matter how apparently anti-White, as long as it did not espouse "Communism" or threaten to change radically the existing socio-economic relations, received and continues to receive their support and their patronage. Unlike some of the more naive "leaders" of the oppressed, the Liberal-Imperialists subject every organisation of the people to a meticulous analysis of its origins, its sources of support, its programme and its fundamental orientation. And they will publicise those "leaders" and inflate the images of only those with whom they believe it will be possible for them to reach an accommodation which will maintain in all essentials the plutocracy in which alone they are interested. These two tendencies among the ruling parties, therefore, tried to grab hold of the BC movement simultaneously. Hence the spectacle of Buthelezi and Co. espousing "Black Consciousness". Hence the spectacle of a David Curry talking about "Black unity" and a Middleton squawking "Amandla". Hence Sonny Leon (who has one foot in each back door of the **Herrenvolk** camp). Hence Beyers-Naudé and Co. (At a later stage we shall look at the factors which induced SASO and other organisations to react to these overtures in the way they did.) It should now be sufficiently clear, however, that there was method in the seeming "madness" of the National Party in tolerating a purportedly anti-Apartheid movement, and of the Liberals in espousing what they understood to be a movement both anti-White and anti-Liberal.

## S.A. Society

In order to understand clearly what BC means and can only mean in South Africa it would be useful at this point to re-sketch the socio-economic background against which the liberation of the oppressed in this country should be viewed.

Superficially, South African society consists of two colour-castes, namely, a superior White and a subordinate Black caste. The latter is sub-divided further through the unequal distribution of privilege and opportunity into the intermediate castes of Coloureds and Indians and the lowest, most oppressed, caste of Africans. The White sector is itself divided along lines of language between Afrikaners and English-speaking predominantly. At a deeper level there

is the division between the White employers and the White workers. We can safely disregard the intermediate divisions for our present purposes. The White employers are spread over Mining, Agriculture, Secondary Industry, Commerce, and Finance, but for present purposes these sub-divisions can also be ignored since the interlocking of interests is such that — at the level with which we are concerned — the sub-divisions are not really significant. The oppressed majority consists overwhelmingly of urban and rural workers and a significant percentage of landless peasants (commonly called “migrant workers”) who perforce earn their means of subsistence in the capital sector. The true peasantry in South Africa is a comparatively small group of people, though this should not cause us to misunderstand the cardinal importance of the land question in the struggle for liberty.

### **Class and Colour**

The employing classes used the historical accident of colour differences in order to keep the class of wage-earners divided against itself. A self-perpetuating mechanism of colour-caste oppression was evolved in order to keep the labour of the Non-Whites exploitable. In other words, through the reserving of most skilled, supervisory, and well-remunerated employment for workers of European descent while all the unskilled and semi-skilled work was allotted to the Non-Europeans, economic competition and the White labour aristocracy’s fear of being displaced were created and perpetuated. Racism and racial thinking became the life-blood of this system at the ideological level, with the dominant group franchised and the subordinate group unfranchised. As long as this caste barrier could be maintained for so long could a low standard of living for the non-citizens (pondokkies, mieliepap, rudimentary schooling) be justified and for so long could the wages bill of the employing castes be pegged at a relatively constant percentage of the value of the national product. For this purpose the propagation and perpetuation of the **Herrenvolk** myth (of “superior” Whites and “inferior” Non-Whites, of citizen and non-citizen) was crucial.

Except for a small group of merchants (located mainly in the sector classified “Indian”) there was no class of employers among the non-citizens, that is, only very few of them actually exploited the labour of others. However, there were those who aspired to do this as the result of the absorption by them of the ethos and the values of the system of private accumulation of wealth. These people, together with the traditionalistic, government-appointed and backward-looking group of chiefs, formed the social base from which came initially that leadership which was prepared to collaborate with the rulers in ensuring the smooth functioning of the system described above.

## Consciousness of Oppressed

In sum, these are the basic reasons why caste-consciousness (misnamed "racial consciousness"), in spite of a stratified industrial economy, has hitherto always superseded class consciousness. Why, in other words, Black and White workers (and even African, Coloured and Indian workers) have not been able to forge the unity which workers in other parts of the world have used so effectively in their struggles to create a new society. It should be clear from this that any attempt to unite the oppressed castes is — in essence — an attempt to forge an alliance between the most exploited workers and the landless peasants. And this is the real reason why the unity of the oppressed is anathema to the rulers, whatever party they belong to. This is also the reason why it has been all-important to understand that the nation-to-be-born in this country cannot exclude any section of the people, and why all ruling parties have hitherto systematically aborted the birth of the nation of South Africa. And this, too, is why the basic assumptions of the BC movement about the nature and the dynamics of South African society represent a retrogression.

## A Balance Sheet

Against the background that has been sketched, it would now be useful to draw up a balance-sheet of Black Consciousness in South Africa up to this point. It cannot be sufficiently stressed that this is done in a spirit of frankness without implying that the people who genuinely think that in BC the oppressed have found a "final solution" are incapable of viewing their own beliefs and actions in historical perspective. The intention is to stimulate thought, discussion and study on a matter which is of great importance to the youth in particular, so that nobody may say that there was no opportunity to reflect on the possible errors of his or her actions.

## Unity of the Oppressed

The BC tendency claims that it stresses the unity of the oppressed people of South Africa. If this were so it would be following and furthering the most vital strand in the tradition of struggle here. In fact, however, it projects the need for unity as arising from the fact of **blackness**. Of course, the people who are oppressed are identifiable in the majority of cases on the criterion of colour because the rulers use this historical accident, as has already been pointed out. But unity arises from the fact that oppression is common to all who are oppressed. It is designed to eradicate the belief that, for instance, those classified "Bantu" are oppressed whereas those classified "Coloured" or "Indian" are not. And so forth. We all know the casuistry with which arbitrary divisions and pogrom sentiments are created and maintained among the oppressed. Those people who though classified "White" are genuinely democratic and, on a principled basis, throw in their lot with the oppressed

have never been and should never be precluded from making their contribution to the struggle, whatever practical adaptations may be required to enable them to do so. This is fundamental and no mere tokenism in reverse.

### **Bantustan Strategy**

The BC camp claims that it rejects the Bantustan strategy of the rulers. It is not consistent in this, precisely because it cherishes unwarranted illusions about the "virtues" of blackness. Take the example of the "Black Rector" at the Bellville Bush. The very idea of wanting to dignify the Bush Colleges by transforming them into "Black Campuses" betrays a complete lack of understanding of what a university is supposed to be. (Let it be clearly understood that the so-called white campuses are just as much Bush Colleges today as the other tribal colleges. There must be neither illusion nor soft-peddalling on this score.) In pursuit of this attempt to dignify sectarian institutions of education the students, inspired by SASO teachings, called for a "Black Rector" at Bellville. But none of them seems to have realised that in doing so they were accepting the idea of working the administrative apparatus of apartheid. There is no difference at all between administering a "Coloured University" and administering a "Coloured Representative Council". This is the one thing that Prof. van der Ross, merely by being consistent with his collaborationist past, has taught the students. The exponents of BC can draw a clear line in theory and in practice between BC and the Bantustan strategy only if they cast off all illusions about some innate, mystical and virtuous quality attached to the fact of "being black". Otherwise BC serves in effect to prepare the soil for the Bantustan reapers.

### **The "System"**

BC claims that it rejects the "System". But there is little clarity among the generals, camp-followers or sympathisers of the movement about what the "System" is. Some think of it simply as the plethora of apartheid signs and institutions. Such people will eventually end up in the some-of-my-best-friends-are-Black lounges of the Progressive Party. Only if its analysis penetrates to the socio-economic roots of the apartheid structures — as was indicated all too briefly in the previous instalment — can BC hope to play a positive, unambiguous role in furtherance of the struggle for liberty. In effect it will then have shed the B and retained only the C, thus enabling it to see the real enemy of the oppressed and direct its fire at the proper target.

The war on "Whitey", even if allegedly defined theoretically in terms of **Herrenvolkism**, will re-introduce the cancer of racist thinking into the liberatory movement. One must draw the analogy from the history of Fascism. The Nazis and their economic-financial

backers were the immediate perpetrators of World War II. German workers supported "their" nefarious government fanatically though the vast majority were not Nazis. One asks simply — leaving the reasoning to the serious reader of these pages — Should the war have been fought against the German people or against the Nazi party and its backers? To repeat: it is not the "White" man, it is the system that oppresses. If it is predominantly white-skinned people who are defending the system against predominantly black-skinned people they do so not because they are fair-complexioned but because they are the privileged captives of this system. After all, black-skinned people such as the Matanzimas and Mangopes defend the system for the same reason even though, slaves that they are, they enjoy only the "privilege" of sharing in the exploitation of other black-skinned people.

### The Liberals

The BC thesis claims that it rejects "White liberals". But it is grotesquely mistaken in so far as it believes that all liberals are white. We have recently acquired a whole litter of black liberals in "Democratic" and in "Labour" parties, in "Inkathas" and in other "opposition" parties. Liberalism knows no colour and it is futile to argue — as some do — that a "Black" liberal is in reality "White".

It is an open secret that there are close links between the liberal horse and the BC caravans in South Africa. One need not spell out the details. While these links remain BC can only become the real gravedigger of liberty, the indispensable tool of a decrepit and discredited Imperialism. Only if these links are severed will BC ever find its way into the liberatory struggle and onto the new road chosen more than thirty years ago by the oppressed majority of this country.

### Blackness and the Historic Mission

BC followers claim that they uphold the dignity of black people and their inalienable right to equality of opportunity. But they are wrong to assert this dignity and this right on the grounds that these people are black. "Blacks" have these rights because they are **people**, a link in the great chain of humanity. Those scoundrelly authors who do so are treacherous when they try to denigrate the contributions of Europe (or of "White" people) to world civilisation, in the belief that they thereby enhance the contributions of Blacks. A movement intent on educating and dignifying an oppressed people will readily and unambiguously condemn what is anti-human in any cultural tradition, be it located among people whose pigmentation is dark or fair. It will not distort history in order to arrive at a so-called **black truth**. There is no need — even though it is the easiest thing in the world, as the history of Fascism proves — to racialise culture in order to make a people feel confident in its future or to give it a sense of mission. The oppressed have a historic



mission not because they are black but precisely because they are oppressed and have, therefore, a vital interest in the restructuring of a society which oppresses and exploits them. "White" soldiers in the USA, and in Portugal after decades of delusion, realised that their governing classes had misled them to believe that the preservation of the old order of society in Indo-China and in Africa respectively was vital to their own future. And then great numbers of them threw in their lot with the oppressed colonial peoples. It was not Whites who were defeated in Vietnam, in Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Angola: it was Imperialism. And it was defeated through the joint efforts of people whose skin colour happened to be "black" and people whose skin colour happened to be "white".

### Humanism

Let us by all means encourage cultural creativity among the oppressed — in art, drama, poetry, dancing, in every sphere. But let us not think that artistic works inspired by an anti-humanist philosophy can ever become great art. Not a single Fascist artist's works have survived Fascism. Not a single Afrikaans writer — before some of the Sestigers tested the ice cold pool of truth with their hesitant toes — produced a work of art. And no "Black" artist whose chief talent is being anti-White will produce art. He might sell quite a bit while the cult lasts — as some have found out. But he will not survive the demise of the cult. Only where the common humanity of all eliminates the racist squint can art begin to live. Accepting that there are no sacred canons of art, that we must experiment without being immobilised by an ever-present dead hand of Old Masters, we should also accept that there is one great, developing tradition in all spheres of culture and that nations through cross-fertilisation bring forth new products and forms that in turn enrich the rest of mankind. Let us "conscientise" by all means but let us not create the kind of illusions which ultimately may lead to that social schizophrenia that throws the patient back into the depths of a depression worse than the one out of which he or she was hypnotised.

These thoughts have been directed to the serious elements among the BC youth particularly. Really, one would hardly bother over-much about the not-quite-so-young opportunists, lay and secular, who desperately try to be "with it" but seldom succeed in hiding the fact that the motto really turning them on is "black is business". Nor about the me-too dolly birds whose consciousness encompasses only "black" hair-do's.

It is hoped that those for whom we have written will take a long, hard, fresh look at themselves in the context of what really is and what has been. It is hoped that they will study the South African situation historically and acquaint themselves with the principles and writings of the liberatory struggle over the past 30-odd years. Time is short and they have much talent and potential; we cannot afford to have them burnt out on a BC ash heap.