

SASSO

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER

1970

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### PLEASE NOTE

1. Viewpoints expressed in articles in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of SASO.
2. All articles here may be reproduced either wholly or in part, provided that acknowledgements are made to the SASO Newsletter and also provided that a copy of the reproduced material is sent to us.
3. This is the last issue of the SASO Newsletter to appear this year. In December we shall publish a booklet on SASO and intended programmes for the year 1971. People who wish to receive copies of the booklet must send addresses to us in time.

PUBLISHED BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
STUDENTS' ORGANISATION,  
P.O. BOX 23, AUSTERVILLE, NATAL.

There is something to be said about the question "who is black?"

In his talk at the SASO Symposium on "Black is beautiful" Mr. Mphahlele warned that people should resist the temptation of being preoccupied with defining "how black is black." To me it would seem that this is just what people are doing - not necessarily at student level, although to some extent this is true of students too, but more so with the public at large.

Some Coloured and Indian people are refusing to identify with African people in calling themselves black. They see this as a disadvantageous categorisation that will limit chances of assimilation into the more affluent group - the white world. Others do so because of a fear for the unknown - the rise of African nationalism and its possible effects. They point to what is happening to the North of us as the example of what lies in store for Indian people in this country. Needless to say, their source of information is ill-informed and deliberately distorted accounts of events there as reported in South African newspapers and other agencies of government propaganda.

On the other hand, the African community too - being at the bottom rung of the ladder - has become over-sensitive to anybody who has a slight advantage over them. They point at the large and "highly successful" Indian middleclass as a strong obstacle in the way towards full emancipation of black people. Because of this, they tend to bundle together all those not like them by way of privilege.

In the midst of all this confusion, certain people are talking about "black consciousness" and are being understood differently by all these various schools of thinking (or should it be schools of non-thinking?) Some Africans claim the monopoly of being called black and some Indians and Coloureds refuse to be called black. Probably one here is talking of minorities in all these cases but then these are worth considering.

Where does the term "black" originate as applied to people of colour? One notices that it comes from various areas where dark-skinned people were regarded as inferior socially, intellectually and otherwise. It became popularised in the States and in the Carribeans under the banner of "Black Power". It was adopted as means of inculcating pride amongst black people in the French colonies under the slogan of Negritude BUT nowhere in Africa has, the term assumed such emotional importance as in the non-African countries where black people still experience oppression. People to the North of us talk of Africans and not of blacks. Whenever they use the term black, it refers to the people of colour the world over and not just to themselves.

/Equally .....

Equally, one should realise that the Afro-Americans, or Negroes as they are called by others, are in fact Coloured people. Many of them have lost the likeness to the African of Africa not only socially, and culturally but also physically. Hence the Coloured people of South Africa are much more African in outlook than the Negroes. But the Negroes are the people who are so sentimentally attached to the term "black".

The essence of what I am saying is that the term "black" must be seen in its right context. No new category is being created <sup>but</sup> a "re-Christening" is taking place. We are merely refusing to be regarded as non-persons and claim the right to be called positively. No one group is exclusively black. Instead, adopting a collective, positive outlook leads to the creation of a broader base which may be useful in time. It helps us to recognise the fact that we have one common enemy and defines our aspirations in fairly uniform terms. One should grant that the division of races in this country is so entrenched that the blacks will find it difficult to operate as a combined front. The black umbrella we are creating for ourselves at least helps us to make sure that if we are not working as a unit at least the various units should be working in the same direction, being complementary to each other wherever possible. By all means be proud of your Indian heritage or your African culture but make sure that in looking around for somebody to kick at, choose the fellow who is sitting on your neck. He may not be as easily accessible as your black brother but he is the source of your discomfort.

Placed in context therefore, the "black consciousness" attitude seeks to define one's enemy more clearly and to broaden the base from which we are operating. It is a deliberate attempt by all of us to counteract the "divide and rule" attitude of the evil-doers. If any of the groups fails to play its part this will be unfortunate but those who feel the pinch must march on with a sense of urgency, bearing in mind all the time that your enemy is not the one who refuses to co-operate but the fellow on your neck. The Judases of the struggle are to be found in all races African as well as Indians, Coloureds as well as Whites. While you may ignore these who shirk their duties, never ignore the Judases for they are an extension of the enemy into your ranks.



University of Zululand:

The students at the Unizul campus decided overwhelmingly in favour of affiliation to SASO at a referendum they held over the question. Although the total poll was extremely low, it was felt by observers on the campus, that it was a manifestation of the general apathy found in most campuses. SRC elections, for instance have been known to register a poll of only 15% or so in the past.

It is worth noting that 96% of those who voted were in favour of affiliation to SASO. The SRC decided to go ahead with affiliation arrangements.

Transvaal College of Education:

Mr. Sadecque Variava has been elected President of the T.C.E. SRC at the recent elections. The total poll was 70%. Amongst those elected are, Alli, Appalsamy, Miss Pillay, Miss Masher, Gani I., Gani F., Patel, Bismillah Miss Pooringsing and Reddy. On top of the poll was a lady, Miss Masher.

University of the North:

Mr. A. Tiro has been elected President of the SRC at Turfloop. Following the elections there was a crisis which led to the resignation of five of the members. Former SRC president Mr. Pry Moshidi is one of those who have resigned. The reasons for the resignations are not quite clear. A bye-election is currently being arranged.

University of Fort Hare:

Following the July conference, the SASO branch people at Fort Hare approached the Rector to seek permission for them to function "legally" on the campus. The Fort Hare Rector allowed them permission on two conditions:

- (i) That Barney Pityana - the SASO President - would not set his foot at Fort Hare. Barney is an ex-Fort Hare student and is banned at Fort Hare.
- (ii) That the preamble to the constitution be disclaimed by the branch. The said preamble upheld the idea of one national union of students in any country and blamed the conditions prevailing in the country for making it necessary to segrate. The preamble was in fact voluntarily changed by the 1970 G.S.C. because we felt that we were apologising for our existence instead of being forthright /about .....

about what we wanted to say.

The Rector further added that the granting of permission would be reviewed on the 31st December, 1971.

Meanwhile the SASO branch sought a student body meeting to discuss SASO and the possibility of affiliation. The result was an overwhelming support for SASO. According to the SASO constitution, if a student body decides by a simple majority to affiliate, this constitutes automatic affiliation by that centre. This special clause was inserted to make it possible for centres without SRCs to affiliate to SASO. In such a case contact with the centre is kept through officials of the SASO Branch which theoretically included all students registered at that University. Hence, with the decision by Fort Hare to affiliate - we hope to see a more vigorous SASO emerging in the Eastern Cape.

University of Natal - Black Section:

UNB broke several records this year in their SRC General elections. Firstly there were 24 candidates seeking election into a 10-man SRC. Secondly 75% poll was the highest ever in the history of SRC elections. So the SRC elected at these elections is generally regarded as being very representative.

Mr. E.O.G. Sooliman is the new President and succeeds Mr. A.T. Mtinkulu who did not seek re-election. Topping the poll was Mr. Steve Biko followed by Mr. M.J. Naidoo. Four members of the SASO executive stood for election and were all returned - being highly - placed in the list. These are Messrs Biko, Palweni, Sibisi and Baloyi.

Mr. Goolam Abram, the "old man" of the SRC who has been on it for five years has retired from active student politics. He was the electoral officer in these last elections.

Springfield:

The SRC at Springfield decided to pull out of the Inter-College Sports Association (ICSA). I.C.S.A. is now tottering at the brink of collapse following withdrawals by T.C.E. and Salisbury Island as well. The only member of ICSA at present appears to be M.L. Sultan Technical College. Students are against the "Indians - only" clause in ICSA constitution and prefer expansion of the association to accomodate all black students.

"Aspect" - the student publication of the Springfield College of Education has decided to become a proper newspaper. In its first issue it carries very well-written articles and generally shows all signs of being a viable newspaper. Mr. Prith Dullay is the editor of Aspect.

The newspaper is definitely the best in the black campuses.

In the latest issue "Aspect" interviews Mrs. Meer, well-known figure in Durban both as a writer and a spokesman of the black community. To quote from the report:-

"Aspect": Can you comment on "Non-White" students opting for the term "Black" instead of being called "Non-White?"

Meer: Frankly, I am hopeful that the term "Black" will extend to the general public. I would like to see the term "Non-White" which is a non-term dropped. To the extent that there is a trend to see things as opposites (the opposite of white is black) Black seems to be a good choice because it immediately extends your identity and paves the way for a larger unity with the peoples of the rest of Africa for instance."

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#### THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES DECISION.

There is very little to add to the UCM statement on the decision by the WCC to give money to the liberation movements operating North of the Zambesi.

The cross-section of statements made by most of those who spoke out tends to make one feel that black opinion in this country is regarded as extremely unimportant. This point was also made in the September issue of "Pro Veritate." Perhaps it could be an interesting exercise for the many white controlled churches who speak on behalf of an overwhelmingly black membership, to find out what the people really think.

Meanwhile we reproduce elsewhere the UCM statement in full, not because we agree with it, but because we think it is one of the most balanced and objective observations of the implications of the WCC decision.



## REGIONAL FORMATION SCHOOLS.

The regional formation schools for the Natal and Transvaal regions were held on the 5-7th and 19-20th September respectively. The attendance at each formation school was in the region of 25 or so people. A full report on the formation schools will be circulated to all centres. We want merely to deal briefly with the major points of both formation schools.

From our point of view, i.e. Exec. the formation schools were extremely successful. We sought to achieve 2 major objects, firstly, we wanted to create a core of people in each campus who not only understood in detail what SASO is all about, but, also who are prepared to do SASO work on their respective Campuses. Secondly, we sought to make all those who are attended, fully conversant with the approach we are adopting in an effort to make students aware of their responsibilities both as students and as members of society.

Questions set for us to answer, such as who are we? What are we talking about? Where are we today? Whither are we going?, helped to put us in a good frame of mind for the business we meant to deal with. We then went further to highlight the important aspects of "black consciousness" and our historical background with a view to creating good ground for discussion.

The study of the Afro-American approach to their problems offered interesting comparisons between their situation in the States and ours in this country. To give a concrete example one group was asked to study the significance of the statement "before entering the open society, we must first close our ranks." This statement underlies the "Black Power" philosophy of people like Hamilton and Carmichael. This particular group made the observation that an open society in this country can only be created by blacks and that for as long as whites are in power they shall seek to make it closed in one way or the other. We then defined what we meant by an open society. Does it entail the competitive type of approach to a country's economical problems, or does it open the ranks fully and allow joint participation by everybody in the country's economy. In other words does our concept of an open society imply a retention of the opportunities for exploitation that one finds in Western-based societies? This was rejected by the group in favour of a more inclusive approach. The group went on then to note that none of the present parties would dream of fully allowing people to participate equally as members of a society in the economy of the country.

Closing our ranks was seen as necessary in this country purely to establish a common starting point. The difference in starting points was seen as the major reason for the diversification of interests and aspirations.

/Hence .....



Hence the group ended up by stating that the original statement should read "before creating an open society we must first close our ranks." The difference of course is of paramount importance in that in the first one the Afro-Americans accept that they will never be in a position to change the system in America and adopt the approach that if you can't beat them, join them but join them from a position of strength whereas implicit in the latter statement is a hope to establish a completely new system at some stage. The second point here also is that purely from a consideration of who we are <sup>we</sup> realise that it is we who must be allowing others to participate in our system. We must not be the ones to be invited to participate in somebody else's system in our own private yard.

Then came a consideration of practical ways of implementing what we saw as the only valid approach - creating a black consciousness. The ideas considered varied from simple community orientated projects to exploitation of the system i.e. making use of institutions created in black areas for blacks. One does not wish to go into detail in this topic. Let it suffice to say that we saw a major difference in approaches to be made to the urban areas and those to be made to the rural areas.

Considerable time was spent in discussing "Black Theology" and what it entails. SASO is aware that it is a secular body but acknowledges the functional importance of working closely with other groups in an effort to stress the importance of this topic.

A sense of nostalgia was instilled in the group by a historical consideration of the black man's struggle in this country. Although this was dealt with very superficially it served to illustrate just how complacent people are at this moment.

All in all people left the formation schools with new determination to do what can be done in the direction of making themselves and the student community at large useful in being members of the vanguard ranks in this stage of our involvement. The regional and local organisation of SASO in both the Transvaal and Natal regions was given a tremendous boosting by the formation schools. This makes it much more of a pity that the Eastern Cape Region has seen it necessary to postpone its regional formation school to early next year.

## THE POLITICS OF POWERLESSNESS.

"The laws of social dynamics are laws which can only be stated in terms of POWER." Bertrand Russell. The struggle for power is universal in time and space and it is an undeniable fact of experience. Throughout history nations have met each other in contests of power. Russell's declaration reveals that people are wont to control the minds and actions of other men by whatever means.

The fact that power is an essential element of politics reveals the contradiction in my title. But this is not the only one of the ironical contrasts that the black person in South Africa is confronted with. By his mere existence man is involved in the game of politics. Man is a political animal. His right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" is a political right. All men, black, white or pink desire the same rights. Without the right to determine their own political goals and aspirations, the black man in South Africa has, in fact, been rendered powerless. They are caught in a web of collective insecurity and fear and have come to accept what the authorities ordain as good for them. The blacks in this country have impressed other nations by their capacity to endure suffering and to be slow to anger. Indeed all powerless people invite the contempt and scorn of their powerful masters.

"The problem of the 20th Century is the problem of the colour-line, the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Africa and Asia, in America and the islands of the sea."

du Bois: THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK. Race relations determine the power distribution in the world today. All civilization is determined by white standards and even the questions of morality, of right and wrong. Because of their monopoly of 'know-how' they were able to conquer the weak black nations, colonise their territories and exploit the natural resources of the land.

In South Africa the policy of separate development must be seen purely as an ideology. The separation itself is not so much the ultimate goal of political action as it is the pretext and a false front behind which the element of power, inherent in all politics, is concealed. It is in the very nature of politics to compel the actor on the political scene to use an ideology in order to disguise the immediate goal of his actions. The immediate goal of political action is power and political power is power over the minds and actions of men.

In South Africa a new breed of purposeful black people is emerging. They are sophisticated enough to understand essential power and can distinguish it from its forerunner as the precondition for restoring to their people and their country its depleted energies. They are beginning to question and reject most of the standards and orientation they have had to suck from white nipples. In order to succeed in their attempts at redefining their goals and aspirations they have to cast off

/all reaction.

all reactions to white society and instead positively redirect the resources and energies of their own people.

What might be interpreted as a loss of faith in white society is in fact an uncompromising rejection of the bilateral approach towards a meaningful social change. This rejection stems from an awareness that by sheer historical accident, all white people, certainly in varying degrees of intensity, suffer secret feelings of superiority over black people and openly despise them for having cultures that failed to equip them with technological know-how.

South Africa's policy of separating even the black races has induced unmerited complexes and inhibitions about each other. The blacks will only be able to make political use of their position of powerlessness, if the African, the Indian and the Coloured races themselves act as a group. The fact that they are un-privileged, disfranchised (except in their respective 'stans') and disinherited are only entities in the stock of common ideas to which appeal can be made and a belief that these common ideas stand somehow in the scale of values which are above petty sectional interests. I share with I.P. ka Seme, South Africa's foremost political commentator at the turn of the century that the black people "although not a homogeneous race, possess a common fundamental sentiment which is everywhere manifest crystallising itself into one common controlling idea." A position of powerlessness, effectively manipulated is apt at strengthening the will and sharpening the intelligence of the victims.

The black people are rediscovering themselves, their dignity and humanity. The history of the relations of black and white peoples from the days of colonialism displays concerted attempts by white people at repudiating the humanity of the black man. This was because by so doing the white man had also repudiated his own humanity and that the black man could not but be seen as a threat to the white man's sense of security. The black man must be proud of his blackness, his history and culture.

There needs to be a complete cultural as well as a political redefinition of the goals and aspirations of blacks by blacks themselves. "Africa no longer desires to be spoken for by self-appointed spokesmen," quipped Tom Mboya. The blacks must also develop a historical perspective and a search for one's roots. They need to have a coherent vision of themselves as a people and a clear notion as to the general direction in which they are moving; in order to know where they are going, they need to know where they come from.

A critical image of the white-orientated values and standards will help us discover that the history of the past has been veiled in a shroud of mystery. A radical re-formulation of history has to be undertaken. There must be a more realistic interpretation of the causes of the Frontier Wars, historical figures like Tshaka, Mahatma Gandhi and Moshesh.

/That the .....



That the Blacks should be known to have loved, lived a happy family life, were religious (but not necessarily Christian); they fought wars bravely, painted, sculptured, sung songs and praises, would have established their humanity and their right to receive fair treatment. It is against this appalling ignorance about himself and his history and particular mode of personality that the black soul is revolting.

We need to know these things so that we should be angry with ourselves for having let ourselves down as we did. We must hate ourselves for having conspired to the rape of our inner beings. Only such a critical look at ourselves will help us plan a better future. We can utilise our resources to instil a confidence in ourselves and the destiny of our people.

This new vision, hope and confidence will give out more of the "black personality" in me. It will give me, a black man, a sense of security and belonging. Only with such a state of mind will the blacks be able to neutralize white domination and propaganda. Only then will it be sensible for black and white men with a humanistic conciliatory vision, to share an identity of interests between the privileged and the un-privileged. Any relationship based on an incompatibility of power tends to be dogged by guilt, equivocation and problems of communication and will be based squarely on the powerlessness of one and the powerlessness of the other. Only from a balanced scale of power will the blacks "never negotiate out of fear". This is the prescription that will restore to the powerless peoples of South Africa self-respect and self-confidence that they may with confidence construct a better tomorrow.

Nyameko Pityana

-----oOo-----

QUOTE

"....we coloured men, in this specific moment of historical evolution, have consciously grasped, and grasped in its full breadth, the notion of our peculiar uniqueness, the notion of who we are and what, and that we are ready on every plane and in every department, to assume the responsibilities which proceed from this coming into consciousness. The peculiarity of ..... our history, laced with terrible misfortunes which belong to no other history. The peculiarity of our culture, which we intend to live and to make live in an ever realer manner."

Aime Cesaire- 1956

-----oOo-----



FROM A BUS.

MY BLACKNESS IS THE BEAUTY OF THIS LAND.

My blackness is the beauty of this land, My blackness,  
tender and strong, wounded and wise, My blackness,  
I, drawling black grandmother, smile muscular and sweet,  
unstraightened white hair soon to grow in earth,  
work thickened hand thoughtful and gentle on grandsons's head,  
my heart is bloody-razored by a million memories' thrall:

remembering the crook-necked cracker who spat  
on my naked body,  
remembering the splintering of my son's spirit  
because he remembered to be proud  
remembering the tragic eyes in my daughter's dark  
face when she learned her color's meaning

and my own dark rage a rusty knife with teeth to gnaw  
my bowels,  
my agony ripped loose by anguished shouts in Sunday's  
humble church,  
my agony rainbowed to ecstasy when my feet oversoared  
Montgomery's slime,

ah, this hurt, this hate, this ecstasy before I die,  
and all my love a strong cathedral!  
My blackness is the beauty of this land!

Lay this against my whiteness, this land!  
Lay me, young Brutus stamping hard on the cat's tail,  
gutting the Indian, gouging the nigger,  
booting Little Rock's Minniejean Brown in the buttocks  
and boast,

my sharp white teeth derision-bared as I the  
conqueror crush!

Skyscraper-I, white hands burying God's human clouds  
beneath  
the dust!

Skyscraper-I, slim blond young Empire  
thrusting up my loveless bayonet to rape the sky,  
then shrink all my long body with filth and in the  
gutter lie as lie I will to perfume this armpit garbage,

While I here standing black beside  
wrench tears from which the lies would suck the salt  
to make me more American than America .....

But yet my love and yet my hate shall civilize this land,  
this land's salvation:

AFRICA SERIES II

K E N Y A.

Kenya is situated on the East Coast of Africa. Though within the tropics the country is relatively free of the debilitating heat and excessive rainfall associated with other tropical countries. This is largely because of the interesting geography of the country a feature which it shares with the other East African states, and for this reason a joint geography of East Africa will be presented.

The coastal fringe, varying in width from ten to forty miles, has moderate rainfall. This part is densely populated, and Mombasa, the country's principal port, is the main gateway for communication with the outside world, and for trade purposes. The coastal fringe has had long contact with the outside world, a fact which is evident in the cosmopolitan composition of the population.

The coastal hinterland is <sup>arid</sup> and dry and is sparsely populated. The Kenya especially, this belt of land is semi-desert.

The highlands of the Eastern rift are mostly over 5,000 ft. high. Temperature is moderate, the soil fertile and rainfall sufficient. This region is one of prosperous agricultural activity. The Kenya Highlands produce wheat, oats, barley, pinapples, tea and coffee.

The western rift highlands are good agricultural land, and densely populated.

The interior plateau, about 4,000 ft. above sea-level is largely arid to semi-desert country. The population is sparse and agricultural activity is niminal.

Because of these belts of <sup>arid</sup> and arable land, most of the population is densely packed in "pockets" where land and climate are good, while vast tracts of the country are sparsely populated.

The population of the country is about 10,000,000 of these about 9,500,000 are Africans, 60,000 Whites, and the rest Asians and Arabs (the Asian population has declined sharply since the government insituted its "Africanisation" policy). Most of the Whites are farmers or expatriate experts and professionals.

The principal tribes, numerically and politically are the Kikuyu and Luo. The Kikuyu live in the Highlands while the Luo are mainly in Nyanza Province. Tribalism has recently emerged as an important factor in Kenya politics.

The struggle for independence in Kenya was one of the bloodiest one on the entire continent. Mau-Mau, and its suppression by the British administration resulted in the deaths of thousands. It was widely feared that the suffering, tensions and bitterness generated during this period

/would .....

would throw Kenya into chaos from which it would take decades to recover. In the late fifties Jomo Kenyatta and Tom Mboya emerged as the main forces in the direction Kenya politics would take. Kenyatta had been jailed for his alleged involvement in Mau-Mau, and this brought him national prominence. Tom Mboya was a young and brilliant trade union leader.

Independence in 1953 saw Kenyatta as Premier, and Mboya Minister of Justice. When the country became a republic within the Commonwealth, Kenyatta became President, and Mboya Minister of Economic Development. Oginga Odinga, another rising politician became vice-President. Kenyatta's firm rule, plus his "father-figure" image, contributed to political calm during the 60's. The fact that Kenyatta was Kikuyu while Mboya and Oginga were Luo, and their close co-operation within the ruling KANU (Kenya African National Union) may have also contributed in sinking tribal animosities.

Post-independence land reform brought more Africans into agricultural activities in the formerly White Highlands. Anti-White feelings in the country have been surprisingly minor. Kenyatta's policy of non-racialism, plus the fact that the country needed white skills, could explain this.

This position of the Asians, on the other hand, has been different. Most of them belong to exclusive Asian religions, and are hence not significantly incorporated into the mainstream of the country's social cultural and political life. 33% of Kenyan Asians are traders and businessmen, pursuits which have placed them in positions of wealth and envy. Moreover, most of them held on to British passports when independence came, and this aroused considerable African animosity. Hence they were largely the losers when the government instituted its policy of Africanisation (by which is meant that jobs and trading licences would be given to Kenya citizens.) Quite a number thus had to leave the country.

The surfacing of tribalism in Kenya has ideological roots. Kenyatta's government committed itself to political neutrality with a pro-West taint, and a capitalist economy. Odinga, however, yearned for a socialist pie. This eventually led to Odinga's resignation from KANU and his formation of the opposition Kenya People's Union. From this moment on, Kenyan politics became polarised along tribal lines. The assassination of Tom Mboya added fuel to the fire, and for the first time since independence, the country witnessed sporadic racial skirmishes.

The country's economy has thrived. The growth rate has been about 6% a year since independence. In spite of this, discontent is widespread. The factors are first, tribalism, and the feeling that the Kikuyu are the new colonialists in the country. Secondly economic development has benefited mostly the upper classes; the Kenya middle class enjoys a standard of living rarely found in



many developed countries. The poor (workers and peasants) have not had their circumstances appreciably altered since independence. Thirdly, unemployment is rising at an alarming rate. This can be explained by the increase in population (about 3.3% a year) and the demands of the trade unions for higher wages, so that most industries have to limit man-power and rely on automation.

Kenyatta, the Mzee (Old One) has succeeded so far to steer the ship of state into relatively calm waters. But what will happen when he goes is the nightmare of many Kenyans. Discontent will certainly surface, and there seemingly is no figure at present who commands the respect of the Old Man, and can consequently contain racial differences.

Perhaps, like Nigeria, Kenya may have to taste the bitterness of racial conflict before she can have a true submersion of tribal animosities. It is to be hoped that this will be avoided.

Charles Sibisi-VPIR

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MR. HEALEY'S VISIT.

This year's speaker at the "Annual Day of Affirmation of Academic freedom and Human Rights" organised by NUSAS was Mr. Dennis Healey, ex-Defence Minister in the Wilson Administration and present Shadow Minister of foreign Affairs.

Mr. Healey, in his brief visit to South Africa has gained himself a reputation of being an uncompromising critic who is not prepared to listen to the "other side." This criticism was made in an article by J.H.P. Serfontein, political commentator of the Sunday Times in the 27th October issue of the Sunday Time.

Those of us who have met Mr. Healey will obviously be completely surprised at this sort of reaction. Some of us spent long hours with Mr. Healey and were present when he held discussions with some prominent black people. We found him one of the most patient listeners ever to visit the country for a long time. Just to set the record straight some of the black people he met are members of the "establishment". While they were critical of Britain's lack of commitment to the black man's struggles in this country they, all to a man, expressed sympathy with the Labour Party cause and wished him and his colleagues return to power.

It is obvious therefore that if Mr. Healey refused to listen to some folk in this country there must have been something unbearable in what they had to say.



I WRITE- WHAT I LIKE.

In the last issue, I took a look at a section of the White Community. Today I propose to concern myself with the black world - the validity of the new approach.

"WE BLACKS"

Born shortly before 1948, I have lived all my conscious life in the framework of institutionalised separate development. My friendships, my love, my education, my thinking and every other facet of my life have been carved and shaped within the context of separate development. In stages during my life I have managed to outgrow some of the things the system taught me. Hopefully what I propose to do now is to take a look at those who participate in opposition to the system - not from a detached point of view but from the point of view of a black man, conscious of the urgent need for an understanding of what is involved in the new approach - "black consciousness".

One needs to understand the basics before setting up a remedy. A number of the organisations new currently "fighting against apartheid" are working on an oversimplified premise. They have taken a brief look at what is, and have diagnosed the problem incorrectly. They have almost completely forgotten about the side effects and have not even considered the root cause. Hence what ever is improvised as a remedy will hardly cure the condition.

Apartheid - both petty and grand - is obviously evil. Nothing can justify the arrogant assumption that a clique of foreigners has the right to decide on the lives of a majority. Hence even carried out faithfully and fairly the policy of apartheid would merit condemnation and vigorous opposition from the indigenous peoples as well as those who see the problem in its correct perspective. (The fact that apartheid has been tied up with white supremacy, capitalist exploitation, and deliberate oppression makes the problem much more complex. Material want is bad enough, but coupled with spiritual poverty it kills. And this latter effect is probably the one that creates mountains of obstacles in the normal course of emancipation of the black people.

One should not waste time here dealing with manifestations of material want of the black people. A vast literature has been written on this problem. Possibly a little should be said about spiritual poverty. What makes the black man fail to tick? Is he convinced of his own accord of his inabilities? Does he lack in his genetic make-up that rare

quality that makes a man willing to die for the realisation of his aspirations? Or is he simply a defeated person? The answer to this is not a clearcut one. It is, however, nearer to the last suggestion than anything else. The logic behind white domination is to prepare the black man for the subservient role in this country. Not so long ago this used to be freely said in parliament even about the educational system of the black people. It is still said even today, although in a much more sophisticated language. To a large extent the evil-doers have succeeded in producing at the output end of their machine a kind of black man who is man only in form. This is the extent to which the process of dehumanisation has advanced.

Black people under the Smuts government were oppressed but they were still men. They failed to change the system for many reasons which we shall not consider here. But the type of black man we have today has lost his manhood. Reduced to an obliging shell, he looks with awe at the white power structure and accepts what he regards as his "inevitable position." Deep inside his anger mounts at the accumulating insult, but he vents it in the wrong direction - on his fellow man in the township, on the property of black people. No longer does he trust leadership, for the 1963 mass arrests were blameable on bungling by the leadership, nor is there any to trust. In the privacy of his toilet his face twists in silent condemnation of white society but brightens up in sheepish obedience as he comes out hurrying in response to his master's impatient call. In the home-bound bus or train he joins the chorus that roundly condemns the white man but is first to praise the government in the presence of the police or his employers. His heart yearns for the comfort of white society and makes him blame himself for not having been "educated" enough to warrant such luxury. Celebrated achievements by whites in the field of science - which he understands only hazily - serve to make him rather convinced of the futility of resistance and to throw away any hopes that change may ever come. All in all the black man has become a shell, a shadow of man, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity.

This is the first truth, bitter as it may seem, that we have to acknowledge before we can start on any programme designed to change the status quo. It becomes more necessary to see the truth as it is if you realise that the only vehicle for change are these people who have lost their personality. The first step therefore is to make the black man come to himself; to pump back life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth. This is what we mean by an inward looking process. This is the definition of "black consciousness."

One writer makes the point that in an effort to destroy completely the structures that had been built up in the African Society and to impose their imperialism with an unnerving totality the colonialists were not satisfied merely with holding a people in their grip and emptying the Native's brain of all form and content, they turned to the past of the oppressed people and distorted, disfigured and destroyed it. No longer was reference made to African culture, it became barbarism. Africa was the "dark continent." Religious practices and customs were referred to as superstition. The history of African Society was reduced to tribal battles and internecine wars. There was no conscious migration by the people from one place of abode to another. No, it was always flight from one tyrant who wanted to defeat the tribe not for any positive reason but merely to wipe them out of the face of this earth.

No wonder the African child learns to hate his heritage in his days at school. So negative is the image presented to him that he tends to find solace only in close identification with the white society.

No doubt, therefore, part of the approach envisaged in bringing about "black consciousness" has to be directed to the past, to seek to rewrite the history of the black man and to produce in it the heroes who form the core of the African background. To the extent that a vast literature about Ghandi in South Africa is accumulating it can be said that the Indian community already has started in this direction. But only scant reference is made to African heroes. A people without a positive history is like a vehicle without an engine. Their emotions cannot be easily controlled and channelled in a recognisable direction. They always live in the shadow of a more successful society. Hence in a country like ours they are forced to celebrate holidays like Paul Kruger's day, Heroes' day, Republic day etc., - all of which are occasions during which the humiliation of defeat is at once revived.

Then too one can extract from our indigenous cultures a lot of positive virtues which should teach the Westerner a lesson or two. The oneness of community for instance is at the heart of our culture. The easiness with which Africans communicate with each other is not forced by authority but is inherent in the make up of African people. Thus whereas the white family can stay in an area without knowing its neighbours, Africans develop a sense of belonging to the community within a short time of coming together. Many a hospital official has been confounded by the practice of Indians who bring gifts and presents to patients whose names they can hardly recall. Again this is a manifestation of the interrelationship between man and man in the black world as opposed to the highly impersonal world in which Whitey lives. These are characteristics we must not allow ourselves to loose. Their value can only be / appreciated ..



appreciated by those of us who have not as yet been made slaves to technology and the machine. One can quote a myriad of other examples. Here again "black consciousness" seeks to show the black people the value of their own standards and outlook. It urges black people to judge themselves according to these standards and not to be fooled by white society who have white-washed themselves and made white standards the yardstick by which even black people judge each other.

It is probably necessary at this stage to warn all and sundry about the limits of endurance of the human mind. This is particularly necessary in the case of the African people. Ground for a revolution is always fertile in the presence of absolute destitution. At some stage one can foresee a situation where black people will feel they have nothing to live for and will shout unto their God "Thy will be done." Indeed His will shall be done but it shall not appeal equally to all mortals for indeed we have different versions of His will. If the white God has been doing the talking all along, at some stage the black God will have to raise His voice and make Himself heard over and above noises from His counterpart. What happens at that stage depends largely on what happens in the intervening period. "Black consciousness" therefore seeks to give positivity in the outlook of the black people to their problems. It works on the knowledge that "white hatred" is negative, though understandable, and leads to precipitate and short-gun methods which may be disastrous for black and white alike. It seeks to channel the pent-up forces of the angry black masses to meaningful and directional opposition basing its entire struggle on realities of the situation. It wants to ensure a singularity of purpose in the minds of the black people and to make possible total involvement of the masses in a struggle essentially theirs.

What of the white man's religion - Christianity? It seems the people involved in imparting Christianity to the black people steadfastly refuse to get rid of the rotten foundation which many of the missionaries created when they came. To this date black people find no message for them in the bible simply because our ministers are still too busy with moral trivialities. They blow these up as the most important things that Jesus had to say to people. They constantly urge the people to find fault in themselves and by so doing detract from the essence of the struggle in which the people are involved. Deprived of spiritual content, the black people read the bible with a glibility that is shocking. While they sing in a chorus of "mea culpa" they are joined by white groups who sing a different version - "tua culpa." The anachronism of a well-meaning God who allows people to suffer continually under an obviously immoral system is not lost to young blacks who continue to drop out of Church by the hundreds. Too many people are involved in religion

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for the blacks to ignore. Obviously the only path open for us now is to redefine the message in the bible and to make it relevant to the struggling masses. The bible must not be seen to preach that all authority is divinely instituted. It must rather preach that it is a sin to allow oneself to be oppressed. The bible must continually be shown to have something to say to the black man to keep him going in his long journey towards realisation of the self. This is the message implicit in "black theology." Black theology seeks to do away with spiritual poverty of the black people. It seeks to demonstrate the absurdity of the assumption by whites that "ancestor worship" was necessarily a superstition and that Christianity is a scientific religion. While basing itself on the Christian message, black theology seeks to show that Christianity is an adaptable religion that fits in with the cultural situation of the people to whom it is imparted. Black Theology seeks to depict Jesus as a fighting God who saw the exchange of Roman money - the oppressor's coinage - in his father's temple as so sacrilegious, that it merited a violent reaction from Him - the Son of Man.

Thus in all fields "Black Consciousness" seeks to talk to the black man in a language that is his own. It is only by recognising the basic set up in the black world that one will come to realise the urgent need for a re-awakening of the sleeping masses. Black consciousness seeks to do this. Needless to say it shall have to be the black people themselves who shall take care of this programme for indeed Sekou Toure was right when he said:

"To take part in the African revolution, it is not enough to write a revolutionary song; you must fashion the revolution with the people. And if you fashion it with the people, the songs will come by themselves and of themselves.

In order to achieve real action you must yourself be a living part of Africa and of her thought; you must be an element of that popular energy which is entirely called forth for the freeing, the progress and the happiness of Africa. There is no place outside that fight for the artist or for the intellectual who is not himself concerned with, and completely at one with the people in the great battle of Africa and of suffering humanity."

"Frank - talk"

UCM'S RESPONSE TO S.A. CHURCH LEADERS

ON THE WCC GRANT TO 'LIBERATION MOVEMENTS'

According to Press reports the white (and one black) church leaders in South Africa have come out with unanimous voice against the decision of the World Council of Churches to make a grant of R143,000 to liberation movements in Southern Africa. From their public statements it appears that the major ground of their objection is that the money will be used by organisations committed to using violence to overthrow white rule in southern Africa, even though the WCC money itself will not be used to buy arms.

The UCM wishes to make no comment on the WCC action. We do wish to comment on the rash of public statements by our church leaders. If the issue really is an objection to the use of violence or, as one leader put it, 'the use of violence to overthrow law and order', then their silence on the use of violence by the white regimes in southern Africa places a huge question mark over their motives.

It is universally accepted that no money from South Africa is included in the WCC grants to these liberation movements. But these same church leaders and members of their churches pay taxes to the white South African government, so contributing directly to the Defence Budget of R271,600,000 (1969/70 figures.) A great deal of this money is used to buy arms and provide military training for our white youth - again many of them are members of our churches. Which church leaders have voiced such strong and open objection to this escalating expenditure on the art of violence? Further, at present the sale of British arms to South Africa is a live issue. Where have our anti-violence church leaders made press statements supporting a British arms embargo? And tax-payers' money (Christian tax-payers included) goes to support police forces from South Africa engaged in the violent clash in Rhodesia. It appears that this has evoked no strong reaction. Is it acceptable that, in the name of non-violence, we have no objections to supporting one side of the clash financially, but object when money is given to the other side? And which church leaders have condemned the morality of South Africans raising money to send food and other forms of relief to the Portuguese soldiers in Mocambique and Angola?

One could, of course, go on questioning the response of our outspoken church leaders on other forms of violence in South Africa, and in fact the basic violence done to people in our total structure of unjust land, power, and economic distribution. But this would serve little purpose. Their silence when one side of the shooting line (the side of the white regimes) is given support, and their outcry

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When the other side (the blacks seeking liberation) is supported seems to indicate only too clearly that the real issue is not violence, but whether support should be given to maintaining the white controlled status quo ('law and order') or to those struggling for change and black liberation ('violence'). One can only hope that they have not seen this implication in the combination of their silence and their criticism, and will either revert to silence on both issues, or condemn equally strongly and openly the preparation for violence on the white 'side'.

The church leaders may respond claiming that it was their right and duty to object when R143,000 is given by an official church body like the WCC to pro-violence organisations, because they are directly involved as members of that body, and because it claims to be Christian. But such reasoning condemns their silence when the South African government votes R271,600,000 for military purposes, because they are citizens of South Africa, because even Christian tax-payers contribute towards the mammoth military spending, and because our government also claims to be Christian.

And it is futile to claim that they object to liberation movements getting assistance because they are initiating a war of aggression against the whites, while the government money is legitimately being spent on defence. If the whites claim to be defending their property and their rights against black aggression, so also the blacks claim to be defending their right to human dignity against white aggressors. Have our church leaders made a really careful study of the claims of both sides so that now they are in a position to arbitrate and to condemn the black cause as unjust and unChristian, and the white cause as right and fair? Again it needs to be emphasised that it cannot be just the means which are being condemned, as both sides are in fact using the same means - only the white side has more of them.

Given the history of the churches whose leaders have come out against the WCC grants, their ambiguous attitude to war, and their silence on the issues raised above, would it not have been wiser for them to have said nothing? Or was their intention to make it perfectly clear which side they are on in the escalating struggle in southern Africa?