

COMMITTEE of TEN

THE MOOD OF Soweto in June 1977 was militant and demanding. For the past 2 or 3 months part of this militancy had been focussed on the Urban Bantu Council (UBC) and the related issue of rent increases. In April 1977, after receiving the go-ahead from the UBC, the West Rand Bantu Affairs Administration Board (WRAB) announced rent increases for Soweto - in some instances of 80% or more. The announcement was met with an explosive response. Thousands of students marched on the UBC Chambers in protest against the rent increases. The building was stoned and the militancy continued into the night with the stoning of buses and the setting alight of two beer-halls. The Soweto Students' Representative Council (SSRC) called for the immediate resignation of members of the UBC, saying that since its inception the UBC had consistently been used by the authorities to oppress their own people. This demand grew in the weeks that followed; finally on 2nd June 1977 the UBC collapsed with the mass resignation of 14 members; this brought the total number of resignations to 23.

This was the context of the emergence of the Committee of 10. Shortly after the demise of the UBC, the Black Peoples' Convention called on Soweto to form a civic body representative of every black man's aspirations in the township, amidst speculation as to who was going to take over leadership in Soweto. On 27th June 1977 the Committee of 10 was formed at a meeting held in the World

newspaper offices and attended by members of different committees and associations in Soweto. Prominent amongst these were black consciousness organisations such as SASO, BPC, SSRC and the Black Parents Association (BPA). Such was the context in which the Committee of 10 was formed - a context typified by a period of high militancy and mass mobilisation, with the Black Consciousness organisations as the main driving forces. The backing that these organisations gave the Committee served to legitimise and give credibility to this new creation born out of the turbulence of Soweto at that time.

Surprisingly, the Committee turned out to be much milder in tone than one would have expected in the circumstances. Its first move was to announce that it was developing a blueprint for local government in Soweto, which would be delivered to the 61 black leaders who had been present at the Committee's formation. It was reported that this would be a meeting of 'professional people and representatives of organisations'. Once the blue-print was approved, this new municipal body would be formally introduced to the people of Soweto at a public rally. Thereafter, representations would be made direct to the Government which would be presented with an 'alternative body that they will not be able to refuse'.

The blue-print was presented on 26th July 1977. It proposed that an autonomous city be created for Soweto with a council comprising 50 elected members. The council would be a policy-making body and would be structured along the lines of other municipalities in South Africa; it would have a management

committee which would have powers to: pass legislation, control the budget, approve proposals and delegate powers to a town clerk and heads of departments. Provision would be made for the election of a mayor and deputy-mayor. Revenue would be derived from rates and taxes, fines, fees, license duties, charges for electricity and other money which the management committee would be empowered to recover. For these purposes the blueprint proposed the establishment of freehold rights. In addition, a five year development programme to improve the quality of life in Soweto was outlined with the sum of R5,000 million as the basic financial target needed to undertake the project.

The response of the white establishment to the blue-print was, on the whole, one of relief and approval. The Nationalist press advised the government to take heed of the proposals as the "structure envisaged is not entirely beyond the bounds of current debate in Nationalist Party circles" (Transvaaler 28.07.77). The stated willingness of the Ten to speak to the government about their plans reinforced the conviction that this was a moderate and reasonable body. The Deputy-minister of Bantu Affairs, Mr. Cruywagen, expressed approval that the Committee had restricted itself to local affairs and was not addressing itself to national matters.

A hostile response came from the hard-liners in the Nationalist Party. Mr. Carel Venter, deputy chairman of WRAB, said that the proposals were 'impractical' and that the Committee of 10 was looking for confrontation, not for solutions; this sentiment was echoed

by Manie Mulder, chairman of WRAB.

However, after an initial period of vacillation, the state tightened the screws. On 29th July, the mass rally planned for 31st July at which the blue-print was to have been put before the people of Soweto, was banned. On 2nd August the Transvaler issued a vicious attack on the Committee of 10 claiming that the latter propogated confrontation with the government and that it was predominantly a Black Consciousness movement, using the World as its mouthpiece. The next day, Community Council elections were announced. The same day, the Afrikaans newspapers challenged the Committee of 10 to prove its leadership by bringing the 'unrest' to an end and by persuading students to return to their class-rooms. On the 6th August a second mass-meeting of the Committee was banned, and a clampdown on school-children to make them return to school was reported.

On August 10th, Cruywagen refused to meet with the Committee of 10. Two weeks later, Manie Mulder attacked the Committee, calling them 'puppets' under the control of 'newspapermen'. All these actions took place in a context of an on-going militant mood in Soweto, with students still boycotting schools and with continuous incidents of 'unrest' taking place. The Committee of Ten were not in a position to defend themselves: they announced that they rejected the Community Council elections and met with student leaders in a bid to bring the situation back to 'normal'. This they later abandoned when the students proved to be determined to carry on their boycott. Motlana issued pleas to the Prime Minister to consult with the Committee of

10 on the future, which fell on deaf ears. Having failed to act as mediators, the Committee was slow in making any headway in actually organising the civic body which they announced would be formed. Finally, on October 19th, 1977, various Black Consciousness organisations were banned and their leaders, together with Committee of 10 members, were detained.

Let us pause here a moment and reflect on what happened in this first phase of the development of the Committee of 10. Basically, the mass militancy and mobilisation of the people of Soweto led to the destruction of one of the forms of political control in Soweto, viz the Urban Bantu Council. The latter was never a source of power in Soweto; it served only to offer a pretence at power sharing. Thus, its dismantling did not lead to an effective weakening of control over Soweto because it had never had that power or control. It had always been a fraudulent sham and was recognised as such. The centre of power, on the other hand, was WRAB, a target still standing. And it was not only the existence of WRAB which led to the oppression of the people of Soweto: it was the whole grand apartheid system, including 'homelands', pass laws, etc. which was the source of oppression. So although the people of Soweto had got rid of the UBC, they were still subject to the national system of oppression. This is not to say that the mass uprisings of people in 1976/77 did not lead to certain gains for the oppressed, and defeats for the oppressors (the present restructuring of the state is certainly in part a response to 1976/77); rather, the battles of that period constituted one moment in the process of

resistance which will lead eventually to defeat. In other words, Soweto '76 did not signify the seizure of state power, but it was still highly significant in that it laid the foundations for a new and more forceful assault on the system. Thus the destruction of the UBC did not signify the final liberation of Soweto. And it is in this context that one must analyse the emergence of the Committee of 10 and its proposals for the municipal autonomy of Soweto.

The emergence of the Committee of 10 was perceived at the time as an emergence of a political organisation "as a catalyst for the political and social aspirations of township residents"(Star 13.07.79). The first task they set themselves was that of producing a blue-print for the governing of Soweto, which was later to be ratified by the people of Soweto. In drawing up this constitution they did not create the means whereby the people of Soweto could actually participate in the drawing up of the constitution. Instead of playing a participatory role, the people of Soweto were asked to play a ratifying role. Calling a mass meeting of people to approve of a plan already drawn up is very different to the establishment of support groups at grass-roots levels who would have the democratic right to submit proposals, approve and disapprove of the actions of the leadership of the political party via various methods and structures. Although the Committee of 10 had a political significance, they did not act as a political party, in the sense of mobilising, organising and educating people at grass-roots levels thereby changing their support base to an active rather than

a sympathetic membership.

Moreover, as was pointed out earlier on, the battle for the liberation of Soweto had not yet been won, so that if a blue-print for the future was to be drawn up, the people of Soweto would have to be informed as to how that goal of municipal autonomy would be attained. The impediments to municipal autonomy would have to be pinpointed, and a programme of action obviously requiring the support of the people, devised. In other words, the blue-print for Soweto was only a political demand, not a political reality, given that the struggle to achieve it had only reached the stage of the abolition of the UBC.

The Committee of 10, emerging as it did within that context, had the potential of transforming itself into an active force in the local politics of Soweto, especially as it emerged with more credibility than any other civic grouping in Soweto. But it failed to consolidate its base by not actively setting up democratic structures at grass-roots levels whereby policy decisions and the election of leaders could be undertaken; moreover, it did not set up a programme of action to achieve the political demands it outlined. Instead it resorted to being a 'spokesman-type' body, with no active organisational backing; it relied at that period on public statements and mass meetings as the corner-stone of its programme of action. This tendency to become a voice rather than a force was to increase in the second phase of their existence, i.e. the period after their release from detention to approximately the beginning of 1979. But before going on to analyse this second phase

of their existence, it is important that reference be made to the concept of 'municipal autonomy'.

It is interesting that a year after the demand for municipal autonomy for Soweto was made by the Committee of 10, various Indian and Coloured communities were engaged in a battle to resist the government policy of autonomous municipalities for them. The Labour Party called for one municipality for all citizens of each town and city, saying that "autonomous councils would not be feasible unless the rates of white and coloured people in the areas concerned were pooled, or unless facilities in coloured areas were first developed to match those of white areas" (SAIRR: Survey of Race Relations, 1978). This feeling was widespread throughout coloured and Indian areas; a representative of the residents of the Indian township of Phoenix was quoted as saying that "autonomy is just an extension of the apartheid policy where the various race groups are forcibly separated to 'develop' on their own" (Leader, 9.06.78). An idea central to this thinking was that the poverty of these areas could not be overcome unless the resources of white areas were shared with black areas, which would not occur if autonomous councils were set up.

It would appear that the Committee of 10's justification of municipal autonomy (blacks ruling themselves) does overlook the fact that genuine self-government can only occur when the people have control over the wealth of the community, and where that wealth is evenly distributed. The initially positive response of those in power to the proposals of the Committee of 10 is itself

an indication that the demand for local self-government does not present a serious threat to the status quo, and is a demand which can be met. It is not possible to go into a detailed analysis of the pro's and con's of self-government here; it is worth noting, however, that there are serious problems surrounding the idea, which need to be worked through and thrashed out.

The release of five of the more conservative members of the Committee of 10 was not coincidentally linked with the Community Council elections in Soweto. In fact, the state tried desperately to get the backing of members of the Committee for the elections, but failed, as did the elections which polled a low 6%. This attempt at the co-optation of the Committee was the first in a series of concerted initiatives by many forces in South Africa to draw the Committee of 10 into their folds; this second phase of the Committee's existence is characterised by a period of a dizzy whirlwind courtship of the 10 by liberals, big business and verligtes in the Nationalist Party. That the Committee was allowed to exist, whilst all other militant Black Consciousness movements were banned, is an indication that the powers-that-be saw in the Committee a potential moderate and reasonable force which could serve a useful purpose.

The character of the Committee of 10 changes. No longer is it involved in issues primarily related to Soweto, but is treated as a consultative body and spokesman for black people. We find the '10' commenting on PFP policy, organising commemoration services, meeting with the Broederbond, with the PFP,

Black Sash, Urban Foundation and Oppenheimer, participating in symposiums on Black Education, expressing views on the relationship between urban and rural blacks, attacking community councils and Inkatha, making frequent comment on issues in the press etc. etc. It cannot be denied that quite often the 10 played a progressive role in articulating opinions other than those of the Buthelezi's and Thebehali's, as well as maintaining some kind of political momentum in a period when mass militancy had died down and the major political organisations banned. But the social forces shaping South African history were changing, a fact which was to have an effect on the character of the Committee of 10.

The most significant force was the growing impetus to absorb and co-opt a black middle-class as a buffer between those in power and the masses. The most effective way of resisting this kind of onslaught is to establish a democratic grass-roots organisation which, by the demands it makes and the action it undertakes, serves to highlight the moderate compromises that middle-class elements are likely to make in the process of co-optation. The militant mood of the masses in 76/77 kept the Committee of 10 from taking on any mediatory role is of restraining the militancy of the people. Once this militancy died down, the '10' was left on its own, subject to the imperialist overtures of social forces advocating a middle-class co-optation. Having failed in an earlier period to embody the militancy of the masses in an organisational form, the Committee of 10 became increasingly distanced from a grass-roots base. Without this organisational base, the Committee

dissolved into a "newspaper/public platform" party. And this kind of political party is ideal for the purposes of co-optation in that it does not mobilise and organise people at a grass-roots level in a democratic fashion, thus providing a force behind the voice of the party. In other words, part of the process of co-optation is increasing the voice of the middle-classes whilst silencing the voice of the oppressed majority. Of course, the Committee of 10 can never be put in the same class as the so-called 'puppets' of the South African government; on a conscious and vocal level they were opposed to the co-optation of the middle-class, but this position was undermined by their political practices which were eminently suitable for the processes of co-optation.

The refusal to participate in Koornhof's committees on urban blacks marks the beginning of a third phase in the Committee's history, viz the new era of the Black Consciousness movement, marked by exclusivist nationalist positions in general, and by a refusal to participate in government institutions in particular. The decision to set up a Soweto Civic Association and the emphasis which Azapo places on the mobilisation of workers was a tacit admittance that the Black Consciousness movement and its organisations needed to establish grass-roots support, a support which had gradually diminished after a brief flowering in 1976/77.

The historical significance of this new era of the Committee of 10 is difficult to assess at this stage; moreover, it would be inadequate if one were to analyse it outside of an analysis of the strength, ideology and

tactical positions of the exclusivist nationalist movement presently emerging. What is of critical strategic significance is whether this movement is adopting the correct response to the present re-structuring being undertaken by the state and big business. Obviously, the strong middle-class content of the movement, i.e. doctors, teachers, lawyers, intellectuals, petty traders, students, etc., is going to prove problematic for the forging of alliances with the masses. Moreover, as their ideological position crystallizes, it is going to accentuate the differences between the various political groupings. In this way, the battle-lines are going to be drawn more sharply and with more precision.

BANTU EDUCATION

SOCIALISATION FOR DEPENDENCY.

INTRODUCTION

EDUCATION does not operate autonomously in any society. In Durkheim's terms, it cannot be understood apart from its cultural context, and it is that cultural context which determines the focus and ideal of the educational system. Education functions to socialize people about the way things appear to be, rather than how they are, or could be. It treats appearance as reality, and in so doing, reflects and reproduces the social relations of production in a particular economic system. Thus, Bantu Education is an