

FRAGMENTATION OF THE BLACK RESISTANCE

Just who can be regarded as representative of black opinion in South Africa? This question often crosses my mind in many conversations with people through the country and on reading various newspaper reports on what blacks have to say on topical matters. Once more the issue was highlighted during the debate on whether or not to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the "Republic" of South Africa. On the one hand Mr Pat Poovalingam in Durban was urging the Indian people to celebrate whilst, on the other, people like Mr Mewa Ramgobin and the Labour Party argued the case against celebration. In KwaZulu Chief Gatsha Buthelezi stated that the Zulu people would celebrate whilst elsewhere pamphlets were distributed from various black sources reminding the people that they would be celebrating the countless sins of the Nationalist Government. The interesting thing of course was the conspicuous silence of the urban African people except for the hushed objections of Soweto's Urban Bantu Council. Not at any stage did anybody state a representative opinion.



Pat Poovalingam, Chairman of the Solidarity Party

Bannings

Any one staying in South Africa will not be completely surprised by this. Political opinion is probably very clear-cut on issues of this nature amongst the African people especially. However, since the banning and harassment of black political parties — a dangerous vacuum has been created. The African National Congress and later the Pan-African Congress were banned in 1960; the Indian Congress was routed out of existence and ever since there has been no

Written in June 1971, this piece outlines that collaboration with the system in South Africa is inextricably linked with operating from separate, ethnic units. Recent developments confirm that Steve had an uncanny clairvoyance: the system tries to keep so-called Coloureds and Indians in the servants-quarters of the white Parliament and keep "Africans" in the backyard of the white Parliament.

co-ordinated opinion emanating from the black ranks. Perhaps the Kliptown Charter — objectionable as the circumstances surrounding it might have been — was the last attempt ever made to instil some amount of positiveness in stating categorically what blacks felt on political questions in the land of their forefathers.

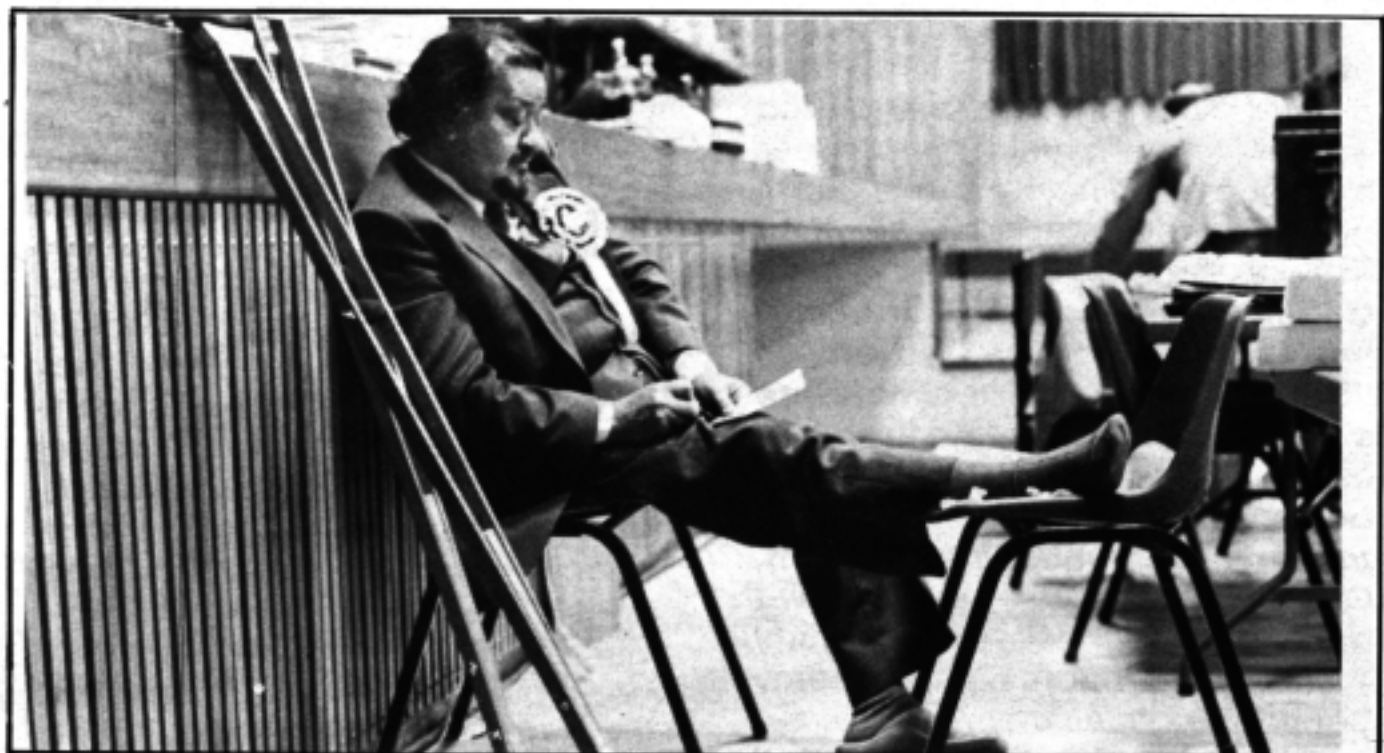
After the banning of the black political parties in South Africa, people's hearts were gripped by some kind of foreboding fear for anything political. Not only were politics a closed book, but at every corner one was greeted by a slave-like apathy that often bordered on timidity. To anyone living in the black world, the hidden anger and turmoil could always be seen shining through the faces and actions of these voiceless masses but it was never verbalised. Even the active phase, thuggery and vandalism — was directed to one's kind — a clear manifestation of frustration. To make it worse, no real hope was offered by the output from the recently created ethnic universities. Sons and fathers alike were concerned about cutting themselves a niche in a situation from which they saw no hope of escaping.

Dangerous

After this brief spell of silence during which political activity was mainly taken up by liberals, blacks started

dabbling with the dangerous theory — that of working within the system. This attitude was exploited to the full by the Nationalist party. Thus the respectability of Matanzima's Transkei was greatly boosted by Ndamse's decision to join hands with him. Clearly Ndamse, being a one-time banned man, convinced many people by his decision that there was something to be gained out of these apartheid institutions. Soon thereafter the Coloured Labour Party, operating on an anti-apartheid ticket was formed to oppose the pro-apartheid Federal Party within the all-Coloured Representative Council. People's logic became strangely twisted. Said a member of the Transkei's opposition Democratic Party: "We know that the Transkeian parliament is a stooge body. We ask you to elect us to that stooge body!"

But it seems that nothing influenced people more to "accept" the "working within the system" theory than the decision by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi to join in and lead the KwaZulu Territorial Authority. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi had for a long time been regarded as the bastion of resistance to the institution of a territorial authority in KwaZulu. Then one morning a newspaper intimated that he might just agree to take it up and within weeks Chief Gatsha Buthelezi was indeed the Chief Executive Officer of the KwaZulu Territorial Authority.



Allan Hendrickse, Labour Party head.

Following the capitulation of Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, a burst of activity manifested itself in these apartheid institutions. On the one hand the Labour Party was making full use of the sanctified platform — the Coloured Representative Council (CRC) — to air their grievances against the government, on the other Chief Gatsha Buthelezi was fast becoming an embarrassment to the government with the kind of things he was saying.

Confusion

I believe it is just here that the confusion over who are the leaders of the black world began to arise. Because of the increased verbalisation of the black man's complaints, the people — especially the white world — began to take these various voices as speaking on behalf of and as leaders of the black world. This kind of picture was particularly built up by the English press, who followed in detail everything people like Chief Gatsha Buthelezi did and said. Of course in the absence of any organized opinion it began to sound even to some black people themselves as if this were the case. The fact that Matanzima also joined in the bandwagon of militant demands has made everyone sit back and clap. People argue that the Nationalists have been caught in their own game. The black lion is beginning to raise its voice. This is a gross over-simplification.

What in fact is happening is that the black world is beginning to be completely fragmented and that people are beginning to talk sectional politics. I would rather like to believe that this was foreseen long ago by the Nationalist Party and that it is in fact a part of the programme. After the kind of noises made by Buthelezi, the Labour Party and of late Matanzima, who can argue that black opinion is being stifled in South Africa? Moreover any visitor is made to see that these people are fighting for more concessions in their own area (13% of the land). They accept that the rest of South Africa is for whites. Also none of them sees himself as fighting the battle for **all** black people. Xhosas want their Transkei, the Zulus their KwaZulu, etc. **Coloured people harbour secret hopes of being classified as "brown Afrikaners" and therefore meriting admittance into the white laager while Indian people might be given a vote to swell the buffer zone between whites and Africans.** Of course these promises will never be fulfilled — at least not in a hurry — and in the meantime the enemy bestrides South Africa like a colossus laughing aloud at the fragmented

attempts by the powerless masses making appeals to its deaf ears.

Laagers

"The Transkei is the Achilles' heel of the Nationalists" claim intellectual politicians who are always quick to see a loophole even in a two-foot-thick iron wall. This is false logic. The Transkei, the CRC, KwaZulu and all these other apartheid institutions are modern-type laagers behind which the whites in this country are going to hide themselves for a long time to come. Slowly the ground is being swept off from under our feet and soon we as blacks will believe completely that our political rights are in fact in our "own" areas. Thereafter we shall find that we have no leg to stand on in making demands or any rights in "mainland White South Africa" which incidentally will comprise more than three-quarters of the land of our forefathers.

This is the major danger that I see facing the black community at the present moment — to be so conditioned by the system as to make even our most well-considered resistance to fit within the system both in terms of the means and of the goals. Witness the new swing amongst leaders of the Indian community in Durban. (I must admit I say this with pain in my heart). Ever since word was let loose that the Indian Council will at some future date be elected, a number of intelligent people are thinking of reviving the Indian Congress and letting it form some kind of opposition within the system. This is dangerous retrogressive thinking which should be given no breathing space. These apartheid institutions are swallowing too many good people who would be useful in a meaningful programme of emancipation of the black people.

Leaders

Who are leaders of the black world then if they are not to be found in the apartheid institutions? Clearly, black people know that their leaders are those people who are now either in Robben Island or in banishment or in exile — voluntary or otherwise. People like Mandela, Sobukwe, Kathrada, M.D. Naidoo and many others will always have a place of honour in our minds as the true leaders of the people. They may have been branded communists, saboteurs, or similar names — in fact they may have been convicted of similar offences in law courts but this does not detract from the real essence of their worth. These were people who acted with a dedication unparalleled in modern times. Their concern with our plight as black people made them gain



the natural support of the mass of black people. We may disagree with some things they did but know that they spoke the language of the people.

Does this necessarily mean that I see absolutely no advantage in the present set-up? Unless the political astuteness of the black people involved in these various apartheid institutions is further sharpened, I am afraid we are fast approaching an impasse. The new generation may be right in accusing us of collaboration in our own destruction. In Germany the petty officials who decided on which Jews were to be taken away were also Jews. Ultimately Hitler's gangs also came for them. As soon as the dissident factors outside the apartheid institutions are completely silenced, they will come for those who make noise inside the system. Once that happens the boundaries of our world will forever be the circumference of the 13% "black spots".

Labour

Perhaps one should be a little positive at this stage. I completely discourage the movement of people from the left to join the institutions of apartheid. In laying out a strategy we often have to take cognizance of the enemy's strength and as far as I can assess all of us who want to fight within the system are completely underestimating the influence the system has on us. What seems to me to be logical at this stage is for the left to continually pressurise the various apartheid institutions to move in the direction of testing the limits of possibility within the system, to prove the whole

game a sham and to break off from the system. I will take the example of the Labour Party because it sounds like the most well-organised dissident group in the system.

The Coloured Labour Party stood for election on an anti-apartheid ticket and won most of the elected seats. Further, the Labour Party wasted no time in spelling out its anti-apartheid stance and revived political activity to a great extent within the Coloured community. In fact the growing consciousness of the possibility of political action amongst the Coloured people is due to the Labour Party. Pretty soon the Labour Party will find that it is singing the same tune and whatever they say will cease to be of news value. In the meantime Tom Swartz will start making demands for the Coloured people and will probably gain a few concessions. The Coloured people will then realise that in fact a positive stand like that of Tom Swartz's is more welcome than a negative attitude like that of the Labour Party who keep on saying the same things. Then the Labour Party will start falling into disfavour.

This is not just theoretical. It has happened in the past with Matanzima and Guzana in the Transkei. Guzana's party — once the pride of dissident Transkeians who wanted to

demonstrate their rejection of the system — has now been relegated to the background, operating even on the right of Matanzima's party whose militant demands are being seen as a more meaningful opposition to the system than a rehashed debate on the protection of white interests in the Transkei.

QUOTE:

Granted that it may be more attractive and even safer to join the system, we must still recognise that in doing so we are well on the way towards selling our souls.

Pull Out

Therefore I see the real value of the Labour Party being in galvanising its forces now, organising them and pulling out of the Coloured Representative Council together with the support of all the Coloured people. The longer they stay in the CRC, the more they risk being irrelevant. "Pull out and do what?" this is the next question. **There is a lot of community work that needs to be done in promoting a spirit of self-reliance and black consciousness among all black people in South Africa.**

This is what the Labour Party should resort to doing. By now they have sufficiently demonstrated that the CRC is rejected by the Coloured people. Further operation within the

system may only lead to political castration and a creation of an "I-am-a-Coloured" attitude which will prove a set back to the black man's programme of emancipation and will create major obstacles in the establishment of an egalitarian society once our problems are settled. This to me sounds the only way of turning a disadvantage into an advantage. It is true of not only the Labour Party but also of all black people of conscience who are now operating within the system.

Thus in an effort to maintain our solidarity and relevance to the situation we must resist all attempts at the fragmentation of our resistance. Black people must recognise the various institutions of apartheid for what they are — gags intended to get black people fighting separately for certain "freedoms" and "gains" which were prescribed for them long ago. We must refuse to accept it as inevitable that the only political action the blacks may take is through these institutions.

Granted that it may be more attractive and even safer to join the system, we must still recognise that in doing so we are well on the way towards selling our souls.

 ONE PEOPLE ONE AZANIA



Fragmented front: Gatsha Buthelezi (far left), alongside him David Curry and Amichand Rajbansi (far right).