

The Emergence and Impact of the Black Consciousness Movement

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In this article, Henry Isaacs, who had to flee South Africa after being imprisoned, condemns the super 'class' theorists who look upon the struggle in Azania as solely a class struggle between the workers and the bourgeoisie. The race dimension (national oppression), he argues, cannot be overlooked. IKWEZI agrees with his argument as the super class theorists liquidate the national question in Azania and overlook the fact that the political revolution (national democratic revolution) is the prelude to the social revolution.

Stanley Uys, writing in the London "Observer", 11 July 1976, stated that as a consequence of the initial uprisings beginning in mid-June, Vorster was facing a rising tide of Black Consciousness in South Africa. He then went on to point out that the leadership in the Black ghettos had passed from the older "moderates" into the hands of the more "militant" youth, all of whom belonged to one or other organisation within the Black Consciousness Movement - the South African Students Organisation (SASO), the Black People's Convention (BPC), the South African Students Movement (Junior SASM - a body of high school students), or the Black and Allied Workers Union (BAWU). The uprisings did not open the floodgate of Black Consciousness, but served to highlight its impact. Fundamental to the philosophy of Black Consciousness are the concepts of Black assertiveness and solidarity: the Movement has contributed very significantly to the realisation of unity in active struggle. This article attempts to examine the conditions which led to the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement, the nature of the Movement, and its role in the liberation struggle. It will be necessary to focus upon:

- (1) the nature of South African society;
- (2) the withdrawal of Blacks from multi-racial organisations.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Throughout this article the people of South Africa are collectively referred to as Blacks or Whites. The term is used here not in the narrow racist sense to signify skin colour, but is used to denote all those persons who, by law or tradition, are discriminated against socially, politically, and economically, and who identify as a unit in their aspirations towards a just society. The term Blacks includes African, Coloured, and Asian people, i.e. all those classified as "non-whites." This classification of non-whites is rejected because it is a negative definition of a people in terms of whiteness (white being equated with beauty, value, etc.), and as such detracts from human dignity. Where it is necessary for clarity the constituent groups of the Black community will be described accordingly.

THE NATURE OF SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY

Apartheid is not simply a clinical division of South African society into Black and White, a view which is held by many innocent observers of that troubled country, a view very often induced by the myriad of laws which impose racial separation, or provide for control of racial contact, in almost every conceivable human relationship, from physical intimacy to shared religious or intellectual experience.

Apartheid is a carefully constructed system, designed to use Blacks for the creation of wealth, and then guarantee the exclusive benefits of that wealth to the Whites. Segregation and the exploitation of Black labour have always been inextricably linked. The plans for the system were drawn up even before the creation of a United South Africa in 1910, when British colonialism, through the South Africa Act of 1909, surrendered all power to the White settlers without reference to, or consultation with, the majority Black population. In 1894 Cecil John Rhodes introduced into the Cape Parliament the Glen Grey Act, which set the pattern for the whole subsequent "Native Reserves" or Bantustan system; a system designed to permanently deprive Africans of their land and independence. Rhodes' words about Africans are still echoed regularly in South Africa today:

"We want to get hold of those young men and make them to go out to work.....It must be brought

home to them: that in the future nine-tenths of them will have to spend their lives in daily labour, in physical work, in manual labour" - Cecil John Rhodes, speech in Parliament, Cape Town, 1894.

"But we must accept the fact that the Bantu will always be here (in the urban White area) permanently. He is here exclusively on account of his labour and not in a permanent context which can give him access to rights which the whites can have in labour, economic, political and other fields.....This is not discrimination but differentiation between people of unequal status." - J.P. van Onselen, Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development, September 1971.

Apartheid is the Whites' method of solving a dual problem: the desire to harness Blacks to the economic machine, while at the same time ensuring the continuance of White domination. Thus they seek both to draw the Black majority into their industrial society and to shut it out. There is only one way this can be done - by stripping the Blacks of their political rights, their power to organise, their ability to build their own bargaining strength. This is the real meaning of apartheid - it is a whole system employed by a White minority to perpetuate its position of absolute power. It aims not at ending the interaction between Black and White, but at controlling the terms of that interaction for White benefit.

It is essential to stress that the conflict is not one of colour. It is one of how to live in peace and harmony. As long as there is the exploitation of one man by another there can be no harmony. The exploitative system is therefore the conflict, and neither apartheid nor the expulsion of Whites can be the solution. Apartheid can only be a stop-gap measure, and in all fairness, even its most radical exponents regard it as such. They say they employ it to minimise race conflict, and not to end exploitation of one man by another. To suggest that colour is the cause and source of conflict is a blatant deception: it is only used cunningly to give that impression, and to blind people to the situation of class exploitation.

"Economic interests accentuate the racial divisions and reinforce the denial of a common humanity. Racial separation is not an end in itself, but a means for conserving and promoting racial privilege. Specific laws (such as the Group Areas Act, and the reservation of certain types of employment for a particular racial group) function to enrich the white man, while the whole structure of the apartheid laws serves to maintain his dominant position, both economically and politically."

BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS IS NOT FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS

The dimension of race is, however, not one which can be ignored, because to be born White in South Africa is to be born into a position of privilege, while to be born Black is to be born into a situation of disenfranchisement, dispossession, deprivation, and to be subjected to all the discrimination and humiliation which are concomitant with apartheid. As one Black leader said, "South Africa is the land of milk and honey - if you are White. For Blacks it is a land of bees wax and cow-dung." The Coloured and Indian groups, while enjoying certain residential, occupational and commercial advantages in comparison with Africans, are equally powerless politically and exploited economically. Their hope of eventual absorption into the White power structure has been dashed to pieces: the whittling away of the meagre political rights once enjoyed by the Coloureds and the rejection by the Government of the recommendations of the Erika Theron Commission of Enquiry into matters relating to the position of the Coloureds. The Commission recommended, inter alia, that Coloureds be granted direct representation in the central parliament, that the Immorality Act which prohibits marriage and sexual intercourse between Black and White should be repealed insofar as the Coloureds are concerned, and that the Coloureds be admitted to the "open" (White) universities. These recommendations were rejected in no uncertain terms by the Vorster regime. The idea that the Indians are an unassimilable group which should be repatriated to India has been dropped, largely due to the refusal of the Indian Government to connive at the scheme, as also by the opposition of the Indians in South Africa themselves. But any suggestion that the Indians should be given any meaningful role in the body politics has been firmly rejected. Coloured and Indian youth reject apartheid and its institutions, and in recent years, particularly at the universities, have shown where their loyalties lie. But there is evidence that there is an increasing alignment by the elder generation of Coloureds and Indians with the Africans as well. During the strikes that rocked the country in 1973 and 1974 Indians supported the Africans. In the recent uprisings, Coloureds in the Eastern Cape and Western Cape demonstrated that they see their destiny as being inter-twined with that of the Africans.

While in the early years of the struggle the Indians and the Coloureds did support the Africans, in recent years the solidarity between the three groups has increased in depth and meaning. There are two possible reasons for this; first the rigid enforcement and intensification of apartheid, and second, the fact that the present generation of Coloureds and Indians have grown up only under the system of apartheid, and known Whites simply as oppressors.

Despite the long history of White settlement, social intercourse between Black and White is almost non-existent. A corrugated iron-curtain has been erected, legal prohibitions reinforcing social tradition. There is no real communication between Black and White outside a master-servant relationship.

While Blacks and Whites are integrated into a modern industrial society there is no single working

class. White workers see themselves not in relation to the means of production (in the Marxist sense) but in relation to Black workers, and the whole workers movement has been poisoned by hostility. White workers are in such a privileged position, and pampered, as to make their class position almost irrelevant: in fact although the means of production are owned by a relatively small group of Whites, White workers are essentially a labour aristocracy whose interests are identifiable with those of the ruling capitalist class (i.e. those who own the means of production), and hence have a stake in the maintenance of the status quo.

While many whites may not in fact be aware of Black deprivation (since it is possible for a white person in South Africa to spend an entire lifetime there without ever entering a Black living area, let alone a Black home) very few Blacks are unaware of White affluence and opulence. Blacks outnumber Whites in the so-called White areas by about two to one; almost every white family has one, two, or more Black servants. Blacks are surrounded by luxury of which they have no part, and Black awareness of their deprivation is uppermost. Integration into the modern industrial society has created among Blacks a desire for the fruits of that system, but it has also generated a deep bitterness against Whites "for depriving them of the unfettered use of even those products that come their way."

As the survey "Quotso", conducted in Soweto by Quadrant International S.A., subsidiary of an international advertising group, on behalf of 29 major manufacturing companies in the country, showed:

"The major complaint (among those questioned who were frustrated and unhappy with the present situation) is that Blacks are not given their fair share, either politically or economically.

Whites treat Blacks as inferior human beings, hamper their progress, and keep them on as low a level as possible."

The survey found that, depending on the mentality of the individual, this leads to apathy, frustration or even open hatred.

Dealing with the oft-repeated argument advanced by whites: that the Blacks in South Africa are better off than Blacks in other parts of Africa, the report of the survey states:

"Whites sometime argue that the Blacks in South Africa are better off than Blacks in any other African country, implying that they have no reason to complain. This train of thought is fallacious.

Every psychologist or sociologist will confirm that it is not the absolute but the relative situation of an individual which determines his degree of satisfaction.

The frame of reference is always the immediate environment, not some distant country to which one has no relation. For the (Blacks) the frame of reference must be the (Whites), and compared with the (Whites) they feel they are badly off. It is the (Whites) who set the standard and level for all material aspirations."

SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE STRUGGLE

While recognising the class nature of the struggle in South Africa, the structural features of the system in which race assumes a cardinal importance cannot be ignored as some dogmatic "Class only" theorists would have it. The principal contradiction at present is between Black and white. Conflict must of necessity work itself out along racial lines because of the racially structured system. This is well argued by Ben Turok, an ex-member of the South African Communist Party, in his brilliant critical analysis:

"It must be recognised that there is a deep and peculiar significance in the lot of black workers. Indeed, blacks are exploited and oppressed in a threefold manner - on the basis of race, as workers, and as people. In the South African case, therefore, the national question must be central both in our analysis and in the realm of praxis: this is the main point I wish to stress in the following discussion!

"Many socialists fear that emphasising the national aspect of the struggle will somehow admit a black bourgeois solution or that the struggle will become so contaminated with racism that it will lose its sense of purpose and direction, leading only to a race war. It cannot be denied that these dangers exist and I shall try to deal with them later. Here we are looking at the formation of black consciousness, in particular among black workers.

Since most Africans and most blacks are proletarians, and since almost all employers are white, conflict over wages, general conditions of work, as well as overt political conflict takes on a colour aspect. That the African proletariat, being the most exploited and oppressed of all, should play the most prominent role in this struggle ought to be clear from the preceding argument. But their role will be played out in national (race) rather than in class terms since this is how the contradiction manifest themselves.

"But even outside the framework of industrial relations, black and white earnings and prospects, and therefore loyalties, are wholly different. Black petty traders, professionals, businessmen and civil servants are all clearly marked out by the stamp of colour which acts with rigorous consistency in determining the place of people in the system. The polarity of race ensures that the difference of income and status within the black communities themselves tends to become diminished within a broader solidarity embracing a wider range of strata.

"Just as a clear conception of common interest has grown among the whites who think only of defending their privileges, so there emerges a counter solidarity among blacks, and both tendencies seem to lessen the internal formation of class consciousness within the respective communities. For the black proletariat there can be no thought of liberation without an alliance of black people of the major strata. The abolition of the colour bar and of white privilege can only be achieved by an alliance of the black disenfranchised directed at the destruction of the white state apparatus. But recognition of this imperative grew only slowly in the South African liberation movement and decades of appeals and protests had to work themselves out before the leap from reformism to revolution could be made consciously, deliberately and publicly."

THE WITHDRAWAL OF BLACKS FROM MULTI-RACIAL ORGANISATIONS

Although SASO was the organisation which began to formulate Black Consciousness as a specific philosophy, it merely had its fingers on the pulse of the Black community, whose views and aspirations it articulated: hence the rapid growth of the Black Consciousness Movement as a whole. SASO was established in 1969 after a careful examination by Black students of their role within multi-racial organisations like the University Christian Movement (UCM) and the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), and within society at large. Black students saw their domination by White students within these organisations as being symptomatic of their positions as members of oppressed and privileged groups in the wider society. As long as the two belonged to and functioned within the same organisations there would always be a conflict of interests. Black students felt that they were part of an oppressed community to which they owed their primary allegiance. This was not to deny that there were no sincere Whites who were concerned about the need for social change: that would have been as absurd as saying that there were no bad Blacks. Conferences about academic freedom and protests for academic integration were meaningless to Black students, who upon leaving such conferences would return to their segregated ghettos where their families were the victims of constant harassment, police terror and brutality.

Black students withdrew from UCM and NUSAS: a period of intense debate, criticism and self-criticism followed. This strategic withdrawal was termed "acceptance of apartheid", "reverse racism", the group most hurt - and which expressed its hurt most eloquently - by the decision of the Black students to go it alone, was the group of liberal Whites. Perhaps it was this hurt which prompted Alan Paton, father figure of White liberalism in South Africa, to say when he was in Edinburgh to receive an honorary doctorate, "Perhaps separate development is worth a try", to which an exiled Black South African journalist retorted, "At whose expense."

Black students were not deterred by the pained whimpers of White liberalism. The essence of politics is that one directs oneself against the group wielding power. Liberals were aware of the powerlessness of Blacks. They were quick to point out the Government's defence budget, they were aware of the ease and brutality with which the police and militia quelled any Black uprisings, they were aware of the teeming number of paid informers in the Black community, and of the hardships experienced by Blacks who were banded and house arrested. Yet they insisted on talking to Blacks.

The White liberal in South Africa was that queer character who, while attending his "Whites only" cinemas, living in his "Whites only" suburbs and enjoying his "Whites only" privileges, slept with the comforting thought that he had "friends" across the colour line. To say this is not to sneer, neither is it to deny the role that some Whites have played in the struggle in South Africa. But for too long they provided not only the stimulus but also controlled the direction and speed of the response to the stimulus!

Black students said that if there are Whites who are genuinely committed to the struggle for social change then they should work among the Whites to make them aware of the injustices perpetrated against Blacks, rather than attempt to direct the struggle. In a society where human dignity is daily violated and where differences between people are emphasised and even cultivated as a means of dividing and ruling, the withdrawal by Blacks in order to re-assert their dignity and identity and work towards Black unity has been essential. "A fact to be recognised is that coming together does not mean hating those who are excluded from our togetherness. It simply means that those who are excluded have no relevant place in our activities," said one SASO activist.

DEFINITION OF BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

SASO's definition of the Black Consciousness philosophy seems to be the working basis for all Black efforts in the country. This definition is contained in the SASO policy Manifesto adopted at their 2nd General Students' Council in July 1971, which is here re-produced in part:

"SASO believes that:

3. (a) South Africa is a country in which both black and white live and shall continue to live together:
 - (b) that the white man must be made aware that one is either part of the solution or part of the problem.
 - (c) that, in this context, because of the privileges accorded to them by legislation and because of their continual maintenance of an oppressive regime, whites have defined themselves as part of the problem.
 - (d) that, therefore, we believe that in all matters relating to the struggle towards realising our aspirations, whites must be excluded.
 - (e) that this attitude must not be interpreted by blacks to imply "anti-whitism" but merely a more positive way of attaining a normal situation in South Africa.
 - (f) that on pursuit of this direction, therefore, personal contact with whites, though it should not be legislated against, must be discouraged, especially where it tends to militate against the beliefs we hold dear.
4. (a) SASO upholds the concept of Black Consciousness and the drive towards black awareness as the most logical and significant means of ridding ourselves of the shackles that bind us to perpetual servitude.
 - (b) SASO defines Black Consciousness as follows:
 - (i) Black Consciousness is an attitude of mind, a way of life.
 - (ii) The basic tenet of Black Consciousness is that the Black man must reject all value systems that seek to make him a foreigner in the land of his birth and reduce his basic human dignity.
 - (iii) The black man must build up his own value system, see himself as self-defined and not defined by others.
 - (iv) The concept of Black Consciousness implies the awareness by the black people of the power they wield as a group.
 - (v) Black Consciousness will always be enhanced by the totality of involvement of the oppressed people, hence the message of Black Consciousness has to be spread to reach all sections of the Black community.
 - (c) SASO accepts the premise that before the black people should join the open society, they should first close their ranks, to form themselves into a solid group to oppose the definite racism that is meted out by white society, to work out their direction clearly and bargain from a position of strength. SASO believes that a truly open society can only be achieved by blacks.
5. SASO believes that the concept of integration cannot be realised in an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust. Integration does not mean assimilation of blacks into an already established set of norms drawn up and motivated by white society. Integration implies free participation by individuals in a given society and proportionate contribution to the joint culture of the society by all constituent groups. Following this definition therefore, SASO believes that integration does not need to be enforced or worked for. Integration follows automatically when the doors to prejudice are closed through the attainment of a just and free society.
6. SASO believes that all groups allegedly working for 'integration' in South Africa.....and here we note in particular the Progressive Party and other liberal institutions.....are not working for the kind of integration which would be acceptable to the black man. Their attempts are directed merely at relaxing certain oppressive legislations and to allow blacks into a white-type society.
7. SASO, while upholding these beliefs, nevertheless wishes to state that Black Consciousness should not be associated with any particular party or slogan.

BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS NOT RACISM

Black Consciousness is not the denial of a common humanity or of a common society. That is an important fact to note in answering the charge that like Afrikaner nationalism, the Black Consciousness Movement is racist. It is not and the differences are these:

- (i) The Afrikaansers are committed to separation as a principle. Blacks are forced to accept separation as a legal fact.
- (ii) Whites are committed to separation as a permanent goal; Blacks have decided to separation as a means to an end.
- (iii) Whites have chosen White freely and by choice as a criterion whereby others are defined negatively. Blacks are forced to accept Blackness as a legal fact.

An illuminating examination of the concepts of "integration" and "separation" was made by a leader of the Black Consciousness Movement:

"Very often it is assumed that if a person is not an "integrationist" in South Africa he is therefore a "separatist", and that because an increasing number of black people are rejecting "integration" as a national goal, they are therefore "separatist", that is, they make the permanent separation of races a

national goal. This is nonsense. The black people who have been accused of being "separatist" are in fact not "separatists" but liberationists. Central to both separation and integration is the white man. Blacks must either move towards or away from him. But his presence is not nearly so crucial for those who pursue a course of "liberation". Ideally they do whatever they conceive they must do as if whites did not exist at all. At the very least the minds of the "new black" are liberated from the patterns programmed there by a society built on the alleged aesthetic, moral and intellectual superiority of the white man.

Liberationists contend that integration is irrelevant to people who are powerless. For them the equitable distribution of decision-making power is far more important than physical proximity to white people.

This means complete emancipation of blacks from white oppression by whatever means blacks deem necessary, including, when expedient, integration or separation. What the new black man is talking about is liberation by all means necessary and this does not depend on whether blacks should integrate or separate. The fundamental issue is not separation or integration. The either/or question does not therefore talk to the point that the new black is making. We will use the word re-groupment to refer to that necessary process of development every oppressed group must travel en route to emancipation."

Moreover Blacks have for long been the object of White racism that they have no desire to reverse the tables. The Black Renaissance Convention held at Hammanskraal in December 1974 was attended by 300 delegates ranging from apolitical priests to radical youth, and was the most representative conference to be held in South Africa for a long time. The convention paid tribute to all those who had taken part in the struggle by acknowledging "that it is not the first to convene a meeting of Black people and states firmly that it wishes to continue in the efforts that have taken place in the past." The delegates then made the following Declaration:

We, the Black people of South Africa.....declare that:

- (i) We condemn and so reject the policy of separate development and all its institutions.
- (ii) We reject all forms of racism and discrimination.

WE dedicate ourselves towards striving for:

- (i) A totally united and democratic South Africa, free from all forms of oppression and exploitation.
- (ii) A society in which all people participate fully in the government of the country through the medium of one man, one vote;
- (iii) A society in which there will be an equitable distribution of wealth.
- (iv) An anti-racist society.

THE IMPACT OF THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE STRUGGLE

The popular uprisings in South Africa testify to the fact that Black Consciousness has been one of the most important developments to emanate from the Black community for a long time. For unarmed people to challenge the military might of a regime armed with, and not hesitating to use, all the modern sophisticated weaponry placed at its disposal by the Western imperialist powers, and to sustain their challenge for such a long time, is an act of remarkable courage and determination. While the success of the liberation movements in Mozambique and Angola, Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, served to boost the morale of Blacks in South Africa, and while the intensification of repression in recent years has had the effect of increasing resistance, all of which have contributed to the present mood of militancy, *the crucial variable has been the change in Black's perception of themselves and their situation.* What Blacks are demonstrating is their rejection of things which they appeared meekly to accept for so long - paternalism, lack of consultation, treatment as undifferentiated units of labour, the compound and migrant labour system. Any assessment of the contribution to the liberation struggle by the Black Consciousness Movement has to view the movement in the historical context of the struggle. The Black Consciousness Movement is in fact part of the growth and development of the struggle.

The Sharpeville massacre of March 1960, when police fired on unarmed demonstrators during a campaign against the pass laws organised by the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), marked the zenith of non-violent protest in South Africa. Thereafter a state of emergency was declared and both the PAC and the ANC were outlawed; thousands of leaders of all racial groups were detained, others forced into exile. Both parties then decided that change in South Africa could only be achieved through the violent overthrow of the minority White regime, whereupon POQO ("Pure Only") and Umkonto We Sizwe ("Spear of the Nation"), the military wings of the PAC and the ANC respectively, emerged. There was a wave of violence mainly selective sabotage, organised by Umkonto, aimed at forcing the regime to make concessions. A critique of this tactic is outside the purview of this article; suffice to say that the regime responded with a massive crackdown under a myriad of repressive laws, and by 1964, after the Rivonia Trial, when

Mandela and others were sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island, which was a deceptive stability. Aided by its powerful Western allies the South African regime increased its military strength and accelerated its economic development, perfecting the strategy of integrating its economic and defence systems into those of the West.

Internally the balkanisation of the country was accelerated under the so-called Bantustan policy, which envisages the division of the majority of the South African population into nine manageable ethnic units. Unity of the oppressed people presented a revolutionary challenge to White power structure, and had to be fragmented. International criticism had to be appeased; so, to mislead the world into believing that Blacks did not have political representation, and to mislead Blacks themselves into believing that they had direct links with Pretoria, a series of toy telephones were created - the Bantustan Legislative Authorities, the Coloured Person's Representative Council, and the South African Indian Council.

Aided by the White-owned media the regime began to boost its own "leaders" who sought to fill the vacuum created by the banning of the ANC and the PAC and the imprisonment of the elected leaders of the people. Vorster's 'Man Friday', Gatsha Buthelezi in particular, began to be feted by the White liberals as he addressed groups ranging from White businessmen to Brownies and Girl Guides. He became second only to the famous heart surgeon Chris Barnard in his globe-trotting; he was invited by church and business groups, as also by Richard Nixon, with whom he had a prayer breakfast. The other bailiffs like Matanzima, Hudson Ntsuani, etc., also made the headlines.

Meanwhile fear reigned supreme in the Black community where the security police made use of paid informers: opponents of apartheid were banned and house arrested under the so-called Suppression of Communism Act; critics of the Government were harassed and intimidated. The cumulative effect of all this was that there was a general impression among Blacks that political activity outside the apartheid-created institutions was illegal.

The formation of SASO resulted in an upsurge in Black political activity. Although SASO was a students' organisation it saw itself as being essentially a community oriented movement, and Black Consciousness as a vehicle of the struggle against White oppression. The response of the Black Community has been phenomenal as is evidenced by the emergence of numerous organisations all of which show the change in attitude amongst Blacks - away from an acceptance of White trusteeship and guidance, and in the direction of self-help and self-reliance. SASO was instrumental in establishing the Black People's Convention (BPC) in 1972, and the Black and Allied Workers' Union (BAWU). The Black Community Programmes (BCP) is a research body that initiates self-help programmes in the Black community. Various youth organisations and cultural groups have emerged, like the South African Black Theatre Union (SABTU) and the National Youth Organisation (NAYO). Black journalists have similarly organised themselves into a Union of Black Journalists (UBJ), which played an important role in accurately reporting the events during the recent uprisings.

Seen in this light the Black Consciousness Movement has played an important role in the reconstruction after the failure of a long campaign of non-violent struggle, and the initial abortive attempts at revolutionary violence. The politicisation that has been done in recent years was evident in recent uprisings. The political nature of the uprising: the Afrikaans language, although a catalyst of the initial demonstrations, did not remain an isolated issue, but was linked with the whole repressive system, and became a direct expression of the deep hatred for a system which keeps people in bondage. The political consciousness and motivation could also be seen in the targets selected for destruction - Bantu Administration Board buildings, buses, beer halls, shops, clinics, police vans - all the tangible instruments of oppression.

But the recent uprisings cannot be viewed in isolation, but are part of the pattern of resistance to national oppression. The student strikes, strikes by Black workers, and the recent uprisings, show a remarkable degree of organisation as well as the realisation by Blacks of the power they wield as a group. More importantly they have realised that liberation is an achievable goal - an independent Mozambique under FRELIMO next door is a constant reminder. In September 1974 when FRELIMO took control of the Provisional Government in Mozambique, Blacks in their thousands expressed their solidarity with FRELIMO even though the Vorster regime banned all public meetings throughout the country. Hundreds were detained by the security police, scores savagely beaten up and tortured. But those rallies were significant in that Blacks demonstrated that the type of liberation they wanted was the liberation achieved by FRELIMO, and not the prescribed "independence" envisaged for them under the regimes policy of fragmentation.

CONCLUSION

This does not in anyway pretend to be an exhaustive analysis of the Black Consciousness Movement, or a catalogue of its aims and achievements. Rather, it seeks to present the Movement in its proper