

# The voice of South Africa's young generation: 'Go underground and organise'

New African talks to TEBELLO MOTAPANYANE, secretary general of the banned South African Students' Movement.

SOUTH AFRICA's clampdown in October on opponents of its apartheid policies missed one of the most important of the new generation of black students. Tebello Motapanyane slipped out of the country a few months ago for Zambia and in November arrived in Britain to help build up support for the struggle.

He was the figure at the very centre of the student demonstrations which erupted in Soweto in June last year and shook the foundations of the apartheid state - he was chairman of the Soweto Action Committee which organised them, and secretary general of the South African Students' Movement (SASM), banned in October.

Tebello Motapanyane, just turned 21, is one of a family of nine brothers. At the

time of the rising last year his 16-year-old brother was arrested; he still does not know where he is or what has happened to him. Another brother is "out of the country".

How did he manage to leave South Africa? "I was in contact with the African National Congress (ANC) underground - they took me out. Otherwise I could have been one of the victims who 'commit suicide' by falling out of tenth floor windows."

The students' boycott of schools, which began in August, has developed enormously. In Soweto alone 42 secondary schools are closed (most primary schools have been closed for some time) and 700 teachers have resigned. In all 87,000 black students in Soweto are boycotting classes, and 300,000

throughout the country. Many of them are leaving the country by the same ANC-organised routes for training for the armed struggle. "There is no other machinery which takes people out", he says. And, he adds with a smile, "The machinery is quite good."

He is convinced that the coming struggle will be won. The spirit is there: "It doesn't matter how long we live, but how we live".

And he condemns the triple veto last month by Britain, the USA and France against proposals to bring permanent and effective sanctions against South Africa; they have nullified the decisions at the anti-apartheid conference in Lagos earlier this year, he says.

Has the black population really succeeded in overcoming the demoralisation following the repression of the sixties?

YES - listen to their slogans: "For freedom we are going to lay down our lives"; "The struggle continues"; and another slogan: "It happened in Angola, why not here?" They show also that what is happening is not merely a student protest against the education system. For instance, one of the things we were fighting for was the release of political detainees, but the press has not publicised this.

There appeared to be some disunity last year at the time of the demonstrations and strikes. What is the relationship now between the students and the migrant workers, and between the students and their parents?

THERE was no disunity - the migrant workers were misinformed. They are not educated and are people who can be easily influenced, and the police were clearly involved in this. The government just told them that if they stayed away from work they would never get work again and would be taken back into rural areas.

Some talks took place between the students and the migrant workers and as a result during the second stay-away from work in September last year they also struck. They understood that their struggle and our struggle is the same.

There is now also increasing co-operation and understanding between the parents and the students.

Do the younger generation still remember the leaders of the sixties? PEOPLE are still very much aware of the



TEBELLO MOTAPANYANE

leadership jailed in the sixties. For instance some of us are from African National Congress families. It did not need any ANC representative in the neighbouring countries to come and tell me to join ANC; from within the country I was already working with the ANC. But for a time some of us were not interested in making public statements about this because some people were under arrest - but now those people are out, so it's no secret now.

Do you think there might be attempts to split the liberation movement?

WELL the imperialists say that the students are the people who are leading the struggle. But we happen to be the people in the forefront simply because the national liberation movement was banned and as a result could not organise openly. But some of us had dual membership - I have been working with the ANC since 1974.

The PAC (Pan Africanist Congress), on the other hand, has supporters outside the country, but no membership inside. Could the black consciousness organisations be used, even though banned, to split the liberation movement?

SOME individuals in the black consciousness movement could, but there are

also people in the black consciousness movement who are not confused. I, for instance, did not see black consciousness as an end; black consciousness was there as something to sensitise the people, but it could not liberate. It was simply an attitude of mind.

But we had to join black consciousness simply because there was no other openly organised movement, like for instance the ANC. But we have seen how the enemy has reacted, how they banished Winnie Mandela. And we know who Winnie Mandela is.

How do the students regard the new US policy toward South Africa?

THERE is no basic change in the foreign policy of America. Simply because Andrew Young is an Afro-American, Carter sent him to talk to the Africans so that the Africans would be misled and misinterpret the whole thing and say, for instance, that colour is the source of our exploitation. But Young is simply the US representative in the UN; he is not Secretary for Foreign Affairs, but he is doing most of the foreign affairs work - simply because Carter thinks that if he sends a black man then the black consciousness movement will be swayed by it.

How can the political struggle now be developed after the bannings of the black organisations?

PEOPLE will join the liberation movement's underground machinery, the African National Congress. There is no other way. There is no reason for us to make ourselves martyrs making a lot of noise and getting ourselves killed by Vorster. The best is to go underground and organise the struggle in a most disciplined and a most professional way.