

Johannesburg

Senator Edward Kennedy, well briefed by his aides on most aspects of South Africa, was visibly surprised and nonplussed by the hostility of a section of the black community to his visit here earlier this month. His bewilderment was probably shared by many newspaper readers and television viewers abroad, accustomed to a portrayal of the black-white confrontation here as a straight contest for power between two racial and political monoliths.)

The group, which embarrassed the senator was the Azanian People's Organization, known as Azapo, which is now the most effective exponent of the black consciousness tradition. The Rev. Jesse Jackson, the black American contender for the Democratic presidential nomination last year, would probably have got an equally unfriendly reception from Azapo had he been allowed to come here early next month. - As it is, Jackson is probably secretly relieved that the South African authorities have turned down his request as inappropriate. Azapo leaders had made it clear that, while they would not have objected to his attendance at the installation on February 3 of Bishop Desmond Tutu as the first black Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg (one of the purposes of the proposed visit), they would have protested strongly against any other appearances by him.,

They argue that neither Senator Kennedy nor Jackson has a record of sincere or consistent opposition to the South African government, that both, albeit in different ways, are representatives of American capitalist imperialism and that they are motivated less by concern for the wrongs suffered by South African blacks than by a desire to score points with domestic constituents at a time when apartheid happens to be in the news in the United States. v

The divisions within the white community, and more especially within the Afrikaner majority, over the past year or so have been fairly

government has pressed ahead with its cautious but contentious reforms.

The rifts within the black population have received much less attention, though they are a major reason for the continuing ineffectiveness of black opposition to white rule.

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Fighting

Michael Hornsby on the rifts between South Africa's black nationalists

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~ but divided

– among themselves

The pre-eminent voice of African Rationalism remains the African National Congress (ANC). I was founded in 1912, its leaders drawn from a small elite of highly educated Africans whose Christian mission backgrounds underpinned essentially liberal, bourgeois aspirations and a belief that educated Africans and white liberals could, and should, work together to end racial discrimination. Their patience had little

' reward. \$

After the Second World War, the

: ANC became more radical and engaged in mass agitation. In the

.1950s it played a central role in the 230!

Congress Alliance, a joint opposition front of Africans, Indians, mixed-race coloureds and liberal

whites. In the mid-1950s it adopted the Freedom Charter, which calls for

a non-racial democratic government

with broadly socialist aims (including nationalization of banks, mines – and heavy industry and redistribution

, of land.

In the early 1960s the ANC, with other black resistance groups, was banned and driven underground.

Since then it has waged an erratic,

and largely ineffective, campaign of

sabotage and guerrilla attacks. At

- present, the main legal vehicle for

multiracial opposition in the earlier

ANC tradition is the United
" Democratic Front (UDF), formed in
late 1983. : ;

The UDF is a loose alliance of
more than 600 church, trade union,
student and local community
organizations . with - a collective
leadership, It, subscribes to the
Freedom Charter. Many of its
officials are former ANC members,
and it counts among its patrons
Nelson Mandela, the charismatic
ANC leader sentenced to life
imprisonment more than 20 years
ago and now in his late sixties. It
was. formed to oppose the new
constitution, which came into effect
last September, and was the main
organizing force behind the boycott

tary chambers for coloureds and
Indians.

Many of the UDF's leaders were
rounded up .by ;the,security .police
after the elections. Most have now
been released, but a handful have

. been charged with treason and face
trial later this year.
- Black consciousness emerged as a

definable movement in the late
1960s and early 1970s, though some
trace its philosophical origins to the

* 1958 revolt of Africanists within
the ANC. who felt that the
movement was too much under the
influence of whites and Indians,

Black consciousness is most
vividly associated with the name of
Steve Biko, the black student leader
whose death in 1977 at the hands of
his police interrogators became an
international cause célèbre. He and
his colleagues argued that blacks
first had to recover their dignity and
self-respect if they were to achieve
true emancipation, and that this
could not happen so long as they
remained tied to the paternalistic
apron strings of white liberals.

Initially, the government was not
unsympathetic to black conscious-
ness, believing that it could be
reconciled with its own racial
ideology of separate development.
The authorities quickly learnt their
mistake when the ferment among
black schoolchildren in Soweto in

1976, 10 which black consciousness greatly ' contributed, sparked off unrest all over the country. The Black People's Convention, which Biko had helped found, and other black consciousness organizations were banned.

Azapo was founded in 1978 to continue the black consciousness tradition, {Azania is a Greek form of a Persian word meaning 'land of the blacks' and was used from the first century AD to describe the East African coast. Despite its foreign origin, it was revived in the 1970s by

South African blacks as a supposedly more authentic 'African' name for their country).

detestation of Chief Gatsha Buthele-

Azapo bars whites from membership, although it has many coloured and Indian members. Its leaders argue that whites are rejected not on grounds of colour but because it is impossible for any white, however well intentioned, to identify with the class interests of the oppressed black masses. Although opposed to violence, Azapo has developed a revolutionary socialist rhetoric which is quite different from the, rather fuzzy political ideas of Biko and his friends. It rejects the Freedom Charter as a 'bourgeois' document.

Gauging Azapo's support is not easy. It gives the impression of being led by a small group of campus intellectuals out of touch with mass opinion. Certainly, its support is much less than that of the ANC and the UDF; but it is equally true that its activities are under-reported in the liberal English-language newspapers here, mostly edited and written by whites unsympathetic to the black consciousness philosophy which they tend to see as a form of racism in reverse.

Azapo and other black consciousness groups, which include many trade unions, have their own umbrella organization, the National Forum. Its structure is similar to that of the UDF. Some groups belong to both the Forum and the UDF, and in recent years there have been efforts to bridge the differences. Bishop Tutu, for example, is a patron of both.

The divisions remain wide, however. One of the few things on which black militants agree is their

21, the controversial chief minister of the KwaZulu tribal homeland whose Zulu-based Inkatha organization, with a claimed membership of 900,000, is the only other significant black political movement. Radical blacks see Inkatha as a divisive collaborationist organization. Lionized for years by white liberals as the best hope for peaceful change, Chief Buthelezi has diminished his stature sharply of late by his authoritarian behaviour in his own KwaZulu backyard, where political opposition is ruthlessly dealt with. There have been frequent violent clashes between members of Inkatha, which is run on paramilitary lines, and UDF followers. Few people still believe that Buthelezi could ever be an acceptable leader to the majority of South African blacks. .

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of elections to the new parliament-

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