

OTR/016/0132/1

Sect Id (3) - The class Structure: Students

Black Students & the South African Revolution

Excerpt from a statement by the National Executive of the ANC, "The Time for Action Has Come", adopted at their meeting in Zambia, Aug. 27-31, 1971.

1. This meeting notes with pleasure that the African students in particular and other Black students generally, have emerged as a powerful potential revolutionary force capable of playing a vital role in the South African revolution.

2. The establishment of the South African Students Organisation, whose main aims are to unite all Black students, to project the true image and dignity of the Black man, and to assert the right and ability of the Black man to lead where in the past he followed white leadership, is a welcome and necessary trend in the situation prevailing in our country.

3. This meeting therefore recommends:

a. That the NEC takes steps to keep all South African Students outside South Africa fully informed on the trends and political developments in our country.

b. That a regular News Bulletin addressed to the Youth in South Africa be issued by the Youth section inside South Africa.

4. This meeting instructs the NEC to strengthen the ANC Youth and Students Section so that it can effectively perform the following tasks, inter alia -

1. To play a more active role in organising and keeping in more dynamic contact with our Students and Youth all over the world;

2. To organise political lectures and seminars in all areas where we have a number of students and Youth concentrated and thereby orientate them towards more active participation in the South African revolution;

3. To plan educational programmes for selected ANC Students, with the object of meeting the short and long term needs of our struggle and our people;

4. To initiate preparations for the convening of a general conference of all our students and Youth abroad.

Sect I d(4) - The Class Structure: Women

Women's Liberation

An article prepared by Zanele Dhlamini on the occasion of
South African Women's Day (August 9) for Sechaba, VI, 9, Sept.
1972.

To understand what the Women's liberation movement today represents, we must understand the general situation which is developing in the Western world.

Western democracy is faced with a general crisis in that there have come to the surface many problems which it has failed to remedy. Even in its most idealistic form it pretends to be a government for all the people. It seeks to convince the ordinary people that it is the best and only government they could have. However, every day we realise that, in fact, this democracy does not, and cannot, resolve their problems. Both England and the U.S.A. are still facing the problems of institutional poverty, rising unemployment and discrimination against large sections of the people. Hence the beginnings of a general awareness which in the United States is best expressed by the Black Panther Party's slogan of "All Power to the People". A slogan which says no more nor less than is

claimed by western democracy's "government of the people, by the people, for the people". Yet the fact that such a slogan can be so threatening to the powers that be is a very strong indictment against the way this democracy is actually practiced. What the Black Panther Party's slogan represents is the consolidation of a general anti-imperialist struggle. A struggle against a democracy which is on behalf of a minority group.

WOMEN IN THE WEST

Many people realise more and more that instead of being themselves subjects and creators of history as they have been led to believe they have in reality, to a great extent, been objects of history. By and large, women in the Western world have been objects of history. Various sections have, of course not to the same extent, been passive recipients of policy. Suffragettes protested; workers have formed

trade unions which have consistently tried to protect the interests of workers. Latterly, we have seen students in Europe, America and Japan demanding to be full and active participants in formulating policies governing their Universities. Some have gone further to identify with the demands of workers and the struggles for national liberation overseas.

Women in the Western world, en masse, are now experiencing this general awakening. Women, like all other dominated sections of society, are fighting against an oppressive system which excludes them from participating in the formulation of policies even within the very boundaries of a bourgeois democracy. The movement is about the awakening of the masses of women to take up their legitimate role in society.

The forms of struggle differ from country to country. The priorities and focus of attack are dictated by the prevalent conditions and the levels of consciousness of the women themselves. It also

reflects the political climate and the influence of the various groups and classes. In the U.S.A., organisations range from the moderately liberal NOW which makes limited legalistic and social reformist demands, to the socialist oriented CELL 16, a Boston feminist organisation, which makes more fundamental anti-imperialist demands.

SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN

Against this background I wish to examine the condition of the Black women of South Africa who live under the policies of Apartheid, and also to look at the very important role, I think, they have to play in the liberation of all South Africans.

South Africa is a racist country. Administrative policies are made to affect various racial groups differently. The White women, although accorded normal voting rights, do suffer the limitations faced by women under all Western bourgeois democracies. One or two serve in the White racist parliament and probably in other fields too. By and large they are grossly under-represented in the corridors of power. Whenever they have been recruited and trained for active (LAAGER) or reserve military service and for police duties, it has only been as tools of the oppressive White government machinery, controlled and led by men. They have been recruited in order to strengthen the government forces against the militant efforts of the oppressed Black majority. They have been called upon when Black protest has been threatening and when there has been numerical necessity to crush them.

"By the Women's Enfranchisement Act of 1930, which gave the vote to white women only (despite the previous pledges of Hertzog and Malan that Coloured Women would be included), the European electorate increased from half a million to one million, and the effect of the African vote was more than halved". (1) (It was finally destroyed in 1936). Ordinarily, the number of White women in government service, the military, industry and management is negligible compared to their numbers in society and the opportunities supposedly available to them as members of a supreme White race. Divorce laws, laws governing succession, illegitimacy and administrative promotions are biased in favor of their men.

NOT COMPARABLE

Their experience, however, can never be comparable to that of Black women. With their limitations, South African White women have been put on a pedestal. A pedestal based on false and mythical bourgeois standards: that they are fragile, decorative, weak

(feminine) and incapable of the simplest work that Black women perform daily for both their masters and for themselves. The White men feed the illusion with minor 'gentlemanly' tasks of door opening and cigarette lighting. With Black domestic service cheaply available for their household and various family responsibilities, White women have theoretically all the leisure in the world. They go out to work to earn pin-money and to avoid boredom at home. (2)

These women will not have real liberty without a change in the situation of Blacks because theirs and the Blacks' situation are manifestations of the same exclusive bourgeois democracy. I have said 'real liberty' because in the experience of South Africa we have seen that Whites can enjoy many unreal liberties, liberties which are guarded by machine guns, saracens and sub-marines directed against 'fellow-citizens'.

A system which discriminates against its own kith and kin is not about to act 'lady bountiful' towards those it regards as less than human.

MOST MENIAL JOBS

Working on the premise that 50 % of the population of any society is female, we can assume conservatively that in South Africa (population 21

million) there are 7½ million Black women, 2 million White women, 1 million Coloured and 300,000 Indian women. (Indian and Coloured women suffer the same conditions as African women. The differences are only of theoretical interest to social anthropologists). Any position, therefore, adopted by Black women who constitute more than a third of the total population and a half of all oppressed people has to be very important in terms of liberation.

Black women in South Africa are at the bottom rung of all oppressed groups as workers. When employed they earn the least and do the most menial jobs.

Of the 800,000 Black women classified in 1960 as economically active, more than 50% were in domestic service; 25% were farm labourers or employed inside and outside the farmer's house; 25,000 were professionals, mainly nurses and teachers. The remainder were factory hands or clericals in the private sector. The average cash wage paid to black domestic servants in Johannesburg per month is \$21.98.

Professionals like nurses earn thus:

Black nurses	\$ 924 - \$1,260
Black 'nursing sisters'	\$1,176 - \$1,680
White 'nursing sisters'	\$2,856 - \$4,200

Those employed in the food and canning industry often earn less than \$8.40 per week.

The potential Black female work force (i. e. 15-60 years) is recorded as 38 "a. The figure is obviously much higher because Black children do not have compulsory education nor are there enough schools to admit them all. They become available for economic exploitation at a much earlier age as cheap child labour. Often they stay at home to release their parents for employment. Otherwise, they hussle in the streets picking pockets or otherwise fending for themselves in rather unconventional ways. Only a minority of Black children go to school.

TILL THE SOIL

Most of the unaccounted for women live in villages and African reserves as peasants where they work harder than anybody else for even less. They try to keep families alive and together where the country's migratory labour policy is to contract men away from their homes for extended periods of time while only women, children and old men remain behind. The former to till the soil, build houses, tend the cattle and generally take charge of the problems of daily living.

In describing the peasant conditions, Govan Mbeki sights instances where

unpaid compulsory labour adds insult to injury to the peasants in the reserves. Men are drafted into work teams to dig holes for the creosote poles or erect barbed wire fences. Women must provide and cook food for these teams. "If a woman has to leave her children without a meal, it is an eventuality that the government officially happily overlooks. What matters is that she should provide the food to the teams when her turn comes. A complaint against the harshness of the law is punished as incitement to disobedience.

"Every widowed woman, for though a woman is in every other law a 'child', dependent on the male heir, in matters of taxation she assumes the position of the absent male taxpayer". (3) (All Black men over 18 years of age must pay a poll-tax whatever their economic or physical condition).

Apartheid hits Black women far beyond wage discrimination. Women are ill-educated and under-trained. 'Job reservation', determinants and regulations plus 'influx control' regulations affect them as brutally as their men. Like them, they can neither be members of legally recognized trade unions nor can they withdraw their labour for collective bargaining. (Under the Terrorist Act, such action would be regarded as subversive because it aims at changing the existing social, political or economic conditions).

While men are absent at the mines, in prisons or farm labour camps, women both in cities and villages are left to suffer the harassment of the police and other effects of various government anti-Black schemes. Under the Bantu Resettlement Scheme, "a phenomenal number of women and children are being moved around, thus suffering poverty, malnutrition, broken families and privations of land and cattle." (4) The Rand Daily Mail (July 23rd, 1970) published a story of four Zulu women and their 41 children who lived in tents for 2 1/2 years, "a brave, but futile resistance against constant urging by government officials to move into a concentration-camp type of township," i. e. after they had been evicted from a farm where their husbands formerly worked. Mrs. Lena Mnisi and her 4 children were sent off to Paarl in 1966 away from her husband because he was a "disqualified person" - he had not worked continuously for one employer for 10 years. In July, 1970, when her husband qualified, she only received a temporary permit and was fined \$42 in November, 1970 (or six weeks imprisonment) for being illegally in the area. Replying to protests, Koornhof, Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, said: "If African men were allowed to contract marriages freely with women not qualified to be in the

increase.

In the small town of Excelsior, 14 Black women were recently arrested and imprisoned because, as the Minister of Justice, Mr. Peiser, put it: "there has been a whispering campaign" - rumours had been rife in the White community about the number of African women with "bastard" children. The 14 women and five white farmers were arrested. The farmers were immediately released on bail of \$250 each. Nobody came forward to help the women. Now they are out of prison. They have the difficult problem of finding employment, and, worse still, they may be hounded out of the location. (5)

Barry Higgs writes that in 1969 "there were 5,000 trials under the Immorality Act in South Africa". He estimates that one in every 200 White males came up in court for sexual 'offences'. The great majority involved White men and African or Coloured girls generally much younger than the men. "Rape of non-White women by White men is statistically far more frequent than rape of White women by non-White men. Blacks convicted of rape of White women are generally sentenced to death. No White man has ever been executed for raping a Black woman". (6)

TRIPLE YOKE OF OPPRESSION

These facts clearly indicate that Black women in South Africa have a triple yoke of oppression. They suffer all the degradations of White racism. They are exploited as workers and peasants and they are females in a clearly patriarchal family structure, where traditionally precedence is given to males in both public and private life. H. J. Simons has written extensively on the subject of African women and their legal status in South Africa (7).

Black women live under three legal systems (customary law, Native law and European law), none of which accord her a position equal to that which she in fact holds by virtue of her influence, her economic independence and her social and political dynamism. Clearly, she has no legal rights. Black women are treated as minors under perpetual guardianship of their fathers, brothers or husbands who intercede for them in legal matters and enter into all sorts of contracts on their behalf. At the risk of being counter-revolutionary in terms of present-day Women's liberation analysis, (viz. the core of the contradictions in society is sex exploitation of female by males rather than the Marxian class contradictions) (8), I would argue that female oppression via Black males is the least of the Black women's burdens. The sexism Black women suffer most is from the White establishment. Black male prejudices have not dehumanized, degraded and brutalized Black women to remotely the same extent

that White men and coloured exploitation are doing. Black men are no index of equity for Black women. They do equally dreary jobs for a pittance. In fact, their lives and conditions are often worse off under apartheid. They live in constant fear of arrest under the Pass Laws and suffer incredible humiliations in the prisons and what is called 'mine compounds' away from their families. Educated women of the Western industrialized countries are livid because they do not have the same work opportunities as their men: they want communal day care for their children, unrestricted abortion and birth control plus equal sharing of home duties like raising babies with their menfolk, among other reasons because technology and bottle-feeding make this possible. These are legitimate demands reflecting their experience within their society today.

South African Black women would not better their condition much by acquiring the status of Black men. Besides, the women have been doing what is considered men's work for a very long time. Communal care of children and other dependents is probably what has helped them survive the inroads of apartheid which disrupt and threaten to destroy Black family life. Unrestricted birth control and abortion assume a political dimension, where government policy is to reward the birth of extra White children and encourage White immigration into South Africa, while it campaigns for family reduction among Blacks.

This looks particularly sinister when the Black numbers are already reduced by acknowledged high incidents of still-births, infantile mortality rates, malnutrition, adult starvation, death sentences and socio-political murders. "From international figures it appeared that South Africa accounted for nearly 50% of all legal executions in the world". (9)

DEFORMED KIND OF EQUALITY

Numbers are the only strength South Africa Blacks have in the face of a hostile government. Black women are, therefore, not about to campaign for their own annihilation. Division of nursery duties will be problematic where modern technology has not yet reached Black kitchens and nurseries. The mother seems to be still indispensable for the children's survival.

It is no exaggeration to say that through the common experience of racist and capitalist exploitation over the years Black women and Black men in South Africa have achieved what Angela Davis calls a deformed kind of equality (10).

To some extent they have had to deal with each other, as people, in much more real terms rather than play the games of Ladies and Gentlemen. Problems of survival have taught the Black

man that the Black woman, who traditionally took the back seat, is no frivolous nit-wit incapable of caring for herself and family in his absence, i. e. when he is unemployed, in prison, detained or has fled the country for political reasons. (11) She has had to work for wages, feed and clothe the family and educate the children to the limits that the South Africa situation will permit. She does this without being spared any of the harsh laws of apartheid policies. In fact, the sexist that the oppressor is, tends to presume his own sexual prejudices into the laws he imposes onto the Blacks: Some of which never were under customary law, e.g. depriving women of property rights and installing younger males as guardians of their older widowed or single female relatives.

PRIORITIES

It is obvious that feminist issues exist in South Africa, but the Black women will have to work out their own priorities according to their experience and the future society they wish to see.

Some Black South African women have made their views known.

Florence Mphosho, a dedicated member of the African National Congress and a previous staff member of the WIDF (Women's International Democratic Federation) says that "the revolution will help to liberate women . . . Politics is the best school for the development of true comradeship and equality between men and women." (12)

Kate Malale, of the Federation of

South African Women, in a message to all women, told an ADN reporter that "the women of the world can help the women of South Africa by launching a campaign against the sale of arms to the racist regime of South Africa by Western Powers, for the release of all political prisoners and to end all apartheid and racial laws."

Black women have participated in the fight for their land and their rights throughout the bloody history of colonialism and internal oppression and there is documentary evidence of this. In recent times Charlotte Maxeka was one of the founders of the African National Congress in 1912.

Women have formed religious, political, social, educational and economic (stock-fares) organizations to combat problems created by the policies of apartheid. En masse (22,000 in Pretoria in 1957) they have demonstrated against the extension of Pass Laws to women. They also campaigned against Bantu Authorities in Pondoland in 1960. Others have since then persisted to publicly challenge apartheid against all odds when recent legislation was made even harsher. Winnie Mandela, Thokozile Mngoma and Martha Dlamini, among others, were held in jail for more than a year in 1970 under the Terrorism Act. Dorothy Nyembe is serving a prison sentence of 15 years for her political beliefs.

Clearly, the sexism of the oppressor should not divert us from attacking racism and capitalism in a very direct way. Sexist concessions to Black women will not change the South African situation. Besides, no real liberation will be achieved by women - Black or White - while the racist, capi-

talist attitudes prevail. All that can be achieved is very limited reforms and concessions. A more constructive way to deal with the feminist problems amongst the oppressed is to launch a revolution within the revolution so that women in the South African struggle can participate as a massive, conscious and equal partner in solving all the problems that affect the revolution. This will involve the re-education and 'consciousness raising' of both men and women towards a transformation of social roles affecting both public and private lives. It will be the women's responsibility to make sure that the successes achieved carry on to the resulting government and are not reversed by the new masters as has been experienced elsewhere.

WHERE IS FOOD

In conclusion, I would like to refer to an article on Women's liberation appearing in the *Sechaba* of July 1970, sub-titled: **A discussion of the issues with reference to the African revolution**; that is, at the risk of being pedantic. Some of the issues referred to were 1) Alternatives to the nuclear family; 2) demand free contraception and advice, 3) abortion on demand.

The first one is clearly not a Black South African issue. The following excerpt from a letter written by a poor mother in the U.S.A. arises from issues similar to the latter two (14):

"You murder me, women's liberationist, every bullshit demand you make; not because what you ask is wrong, but because of what you leave out. Where is free childbirth in your plat-

form, where is decent pre-natal care? Where is nourishing food for me, so my child isn't born premature and retarded? So he doesn't die in infancy? Where is a decent place to live, enough clothes, freedom from disease and filth . . . ?" There is everything to be gained by all individual women in making those three demands, even though they reflect the needs of only a particular class and condition of women. In South Africa it is mainly the needs of the non-poor white woman. There is no need for Black women to echo them.

"FOR WHAT IS DONE OR LEARNED BY ONE CLASS OF WOMEN BECOMES BY VIRTUE OF THEIR COMMON WOMANHOOD THE PROPERTY OF ALL WOMEN . . . EVENTUALLY."

Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell 1859

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Mbeki, Govan, *South Africa: The Peasants' Revolt* Britain, Penguin Books 1964, p. 27
- (2) It is claimed that the problem of poverty amongst Whites has been eliminated. Watts, H. I. *Poverty: Some Implications of Inequality* Johannesburg, Spro-Cox No. 4, 1971, pp 51, 53
- (3) Mbeki, Govan, *op. cit.*, pp 99 and 108
- (4) Desmond, Cosmas, *The Discarded People* England, Penguin Books, 1971
- (5) *Sechaba* (April 1971) Vol. 5, No. 4, p. 11.
- (6) Higgs, Barry, *Sex and Race*, *Sechaba* Vol 4, No. 6, June 1970, pp3 and 8
- (7) Simons, H. J., *African Women - Their Legal Status in South Africa*, London, C. Hurst and Co., 1968.
- (8) Firestone Shulamith, *The Dialectic of Sex - The Case for Feminist Revolution*. New York, W. Morrow and Co., Inc., 1970, p6. "We can attempt to develop a materialist view of history based on sex itself."
- (9) Horrell, Muriel, *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa*. S.A. Institute of Race Rel. Jan 1971, p. 44
- (10) Davis, Angela, *Reflections on the Black Women's Role in the Community of Slaves*, *Black Scholar - Journal of Black Studies and Research*, Vol. 3, No. 4, Dec. 1971.
- (11) Horrell, Muriel, *op. cit.*, pp 42-43

In 1967, "496,071 sentenced and 257,651 unsentenced prisoners had been admitted to goal." "In the same year, 222,600 Africans were in prison for up to one month." For the same period (1968-1969) breast-fed infants admitted to goal with their mothers, or born during the mother's detention, were:-

	White	Black	Total
With Mother	3	4,697	4,700
Born in Detention	1	186	187

- (12) *Sechaba*, Aug. 1970, Vol 4, No. 8
- (13) *Sechaba*, Vol 4, Nos 11-12 - Nov./Dec. 1970, pp 19
- (14) Anonymous, *Women - A Journal of Liberation* Vol 2, No. 3, p. 51

Dilemmas of the movements:
Sect. III c(5) - ~~Cultural Movement~~
The Party and the Army

The Relationship Between the Political and the Military

From "Strategy and Tactics of the ANC" issued at its Consultative Conference in Morogoro, April 1969.