

Lum/088/0043/02

File

Black Conscious

Return to Tappi movement (BCM)

6/12/77

THE EXILE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT STUDENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

Botswana is a country where most of the exile members of the Black Consciousness Movement reside and operate. Their operations date as far back as 1973 when the first group of students arrived. They first established themselves in Lobatse. It was here that the first contradictions inside the group developed. The group then split up, leaving ~~in~~ Lobatse for Gaborone. Harry Nengwekhulu remained in lobatse. This split was to lay a basis of the establishment of the succeeding groups and factions.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

The Black Consciousness Movement in its development shows signs of development which could be interpreted to be the elements which laid the format for the present situation. From its early days SASO was beset with problems of identity of political direction. Its main worry was to be politically effective without being identified with the liberation movements. This was to avoid the government acting against them in their operations. Difficult as this manuevre was they struck a compromise line adopting a ~~xx~~ stance of "Positive neutrality" towards the liberation movements, as they put it. This line is said to persist to the present date.

The fear of being declared illegal organisations, led to the formation of other Black Consciousness movements as autonomous bodies from the already established SASO. The first was ABPC, followed by SASM, then BAWU and NAYO. In their operations these different movements tended to overlap and duplicate each other's activities. This led to problems of coordination and definition of roles. Other problems which later arose were related to personality clashes and inter-movement rivalry. These appeared between SASO and BPC, SASO and BAWU, and SASO as opposed to NAYO. The question which arose at most of these disputes, was that of whether SASO had the power to make decision which could be binding to all the individual organisations under the umbrella of Black Consciousness. Several discussions were held to this effect but to no avail.

This impasse led to a hardening of attitudes between the above-mentioned contesting parties. These difficulties were further made more complicated by the bannings of the majority of the leadership of the Black Consciousness movements. The new leadership which took over ~~xx~~ also found difficult to deal with matters of the movements. The old banned leadership still wanted to control the developments of the movements. The new leadership wanted to have a measure of freedom in the handling of policy matters. The rank and file also aligned ~~xxxx~~ themselves along the lines of the old or new Leadership. This created many conflicts in the entire movement.

From this time there were many points of concern in the unity of the individual movements and also between the different movements. Though these differences did not lead to direct physical splits in the movements as such but they were nonetheless very significant, especially in the later development of the BCM. These internal strifes were more vigorous in the Workers field. The Black Allied ~~xxxxxxxx~~ workers Union which was formed by Drake Koka, wanted to form an umbrella union along the lines of the ICU. The Black Workers Project of the South African Student's ~~xx~~ Organisation was almost at the same time forming or encouraging the formation of craft unions. BPC also engaged in the Workers field. The gap between BPC and SASO became even wider.

When the conditions of living under a banning order were much more than they could bear, four of the leading members of the BCM fled to Botswana. On reaching their destination they were still under the old illusion of adopting "positive neutrality" towards the ANC and the PAC. They thus thought of trying to remain neutral in ~~xxx~~ face of the ~~xxx~~ existing alignments of the the ANC and PAC. This then was a further step in the direction of remaining idle in Botswana.

FORMATION OF GROUPS IN BOTSWANA.

Groupings in Botswana started from the time there was a fresh influx after the "Pro-Frelimo Rally" police harassment of the activists of the Black Consciousness Movement. The old exile group led by Bokwe was the assembly point of most of the refugee students. Soon afterwards there were fresh contradictions most of which had a root in some of the old contradictions that existed inside the different movements inside South Africa. Siphò Buthelezi, left the common dwellings in Gaborone and went to reside in Mochudi whilst employed as a teacher. At that moment some of the exile students who were not on good terms with the Bokwe group, left to stay with Harry and others took up employment as teachers in different parts of the country.

A new group exiles came into Botswana which was from an anti-SA government group based in Noordgesig township in Johannesburg, called AFRO. This group stayed with the Bokwe group and left to join Siphò in Mochudi. Soon thereafter other exile students joined the group that was staying with Siphò. The Afro-Group soon developed contradictions with Siphò and left Siphò group to pursue a independent existence. Other smaller groups also constituted themselves around a student who could provide accommodation for them.

The later developments in the groupings centered mostly around the agreement that was made between the PAC and the Bokwegroup. This evolved from the above-mentioned view that they were not going to show preference for any of the liberation movements. They thus entered into an agreement with the PAC for the acquisition of military skills with "no strings attached." The Siphò group not to be outdone by the Bokwe group also entered into alliance with the PAC but in this case Siphò acted as a recruiting agent for the PAC. When the rest of the group that stayed with Siphò discovered that the deal was only with Siphò and did not involve them, they also left and constituted a group of their own. On the return of the group that had gone to train

4/ Under

under the PAC agreement, there developed serious contradictions between them and the group that had remained. The main point of controversy was the relation to the PAC after the breakdown of the agreement. The group that had been trained felt that there was nothing that they could still do with the PAC but the group that had remained felt that no open hostilities must be displayed to the PAC. When this conflict looked like being resolved there developed new contradictions from the inside the group that had trained. Some of them felt that they had been sufficiently trained to start fighting. This feeling was further intensified by the SOWETO uprising. They felt that the patience of the people had been stretched to the limit and that it was time for somebody to act.

The idea of a third force had been strongly mooted since the group had not aligned itself to any of the existing liberation movements. When the agreement with the PAC fell away this idea became much more strongly felt. This became a new source of conflict that led to a break within the Bokwe group. The group that felt that they had to continue with the idea of the third force remained and the group that was against it pulled away pursuing different engagements; some joining the liberation movement others remaining in Botswana to try and find scholarships until such time that there was something that they felt sure to commit themselves to.

On arrival of the group that was escaping from the post-SOWETO reprisals there was such a situation that was not conducive to progressive decision-making. The main deterrent being the many factions that had already spent some time in Botswana's attitude to the ANC. The UMSA and its many factions, the group of 8, the PAC and its factions and the different factions of the Black Consciousness Movement all had a negative attitude to the ANC. As such as soon as the new students arrived in Botswana there were such a confusing array of political opinions that the students could not find it easy to make a proper decision.

The different groups in Botswana all wanted to recruit the SSRC students for their own programmes which are not clear to date. The SSRC students finding themselves suddenly surrounded by so much demand and publicity felt that they were important and as such they could be a force on their own. Tsietse Mashinini became the first rallying point and as soon as the succeeding leaders of came to Botswana they also felt leaders in their own right, and as such had a following. At first there was formed a committee in Gaborone called the Soweto Students Relief Committee. When it also became immersed in personality clashes it was bound to collapse. There then developed other splits within the SSRC. There was a group that called itself the Central Committee, led by Soweto students but having Thato Bereng as some sort of spiritual leader. The other students remained calling itself the SSRC.

CONCLUSION.

The situation in Botswana is wrought with confusion. All shades of political opinions are reflected in the confusion. Most of the groups claim to be ~~Max~~ Marxists. Though there are such claims there is as such no single group that has the political analysis of the South African situation correct. They are all at best ^{mouth}~~ing~~ revolutionary slogans. The run of events in the Botswana situation all point ^{to} an ultimate collapse of the groups the same way that the first groups that came into Botswana from the Black consciousness Movement, did.

0000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000