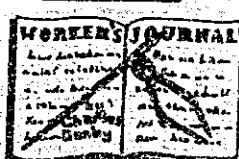


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by Charles Denby, Editor
author of
*Indignant Heart: A Black
Worker's Journal*

*I am turning over my
column to Lou Turner for
a special report on South
Africa, the Black Con-
sciousness Movement and
Marxist-Humanism — C.D.*

Soweto Day: Black Consciousness and Marxist-Humanism

No doubt P.W. Botha's neo-fascist South African regime thought it was sending another law and order message to the Azanian people's struggle when it decided to execute three young revolutionaries — Simon Mogoerane, 23 years old; Jerry Mosokoli, 25; and Marcus Motlana, 27 — on the eve of the seventh anniversary of the June 16 Soweto Rebellion in arrogant contempt of international pleas for clemency. The massive memorial demonstrations for the three young ANC (African National Congress) freedom fighters and the many Soweto Day commemorations which swept the country also left no doubt in anyone's mind that the Azanian freedom answer to that racist apartheid order continues to be: "Aniandla ngawethu!" (Power belongs to us!)

When the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania, BCM(A), asked a representative of Marxist-Humanism to speak at its Soweto Day conference, June 16-18, I immediately accepted. I wanted not only to express News and Letters Committee's solidarity with the liberation movement, but because we were in the process of publishing the 20th anniversary fourth edition of *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard*. I wanted also to present our 40-year history of activity and thought on South Africa as a continuity with Marx's view of the Black world.

The conference, held at Howard University, was attended by BCM exiles and African-American activists, as well as representatives from other African liberation movements, such as the Eritrean struggle, and Left organizations. As stated in the conference program, the organizers wanted to set Azanian liberation in the global context of today's freedom movements "from Azania to Eritrea ... from El Salvador to the southside of Miami."

MARXIST-HUMANISM AND GENERATIONS OF RESISTANCE

The conference focused on the "generations of resistance" to racist capitalism in South Africa that culminated in the 1976-78 Black Consciousness Rebellions, and the deepening of those revolutionary impulses today as manifested in the most massive Black trade union movement ever to challenge apartheid. For not only has Black labor been the Achilles heel of South African capitalism, it has, since the days when Black workers in South Africa read and disseminated the ideas of Garveyism, practiced the dialectical two-way road to liberation between the U.S. and Africa as revolutionary internationalism.

On the second evening of the conference I summarized the Marxist-Humanist experience of that two-way dialectic. Thus, it was the 1950s when we linked the Montgomery Bus Boycott which marked the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement to the boycott of the buses in Johannesburg and the women's anti-pass campaign of 1957. We recognized again in the 1960s from newly independent West Africa that a new stage had been reached when the late Robert Sobukwe formed the Pan-African Congress and continued the anti-passbook campaign that brought on the Sharpeville massacre. However, it was in the "Soweto period" of the 1970s that we caught the integrity of philosophy and revolution as BCM activist-thinkers like Steve Biko began to re-articulate the theoretical ground of the South African revolution, drawing on the thought of Frantz Fanon.

This Marxist-Humanist tracing of Black Consciousness in South Africa has led to a most extensive dialogue with Black South African revolutionaries. The many forums where we sponsored such speakers as I.B. Tabata, Phyllis Ntantala and student activists from the BCM, as well as publishing the voices of the Azanian struggle in *News & Letters*, intensified following the Soweto rebellion. (See especially "Steve Biko Speaks for Himself," November, 1977 N&L)

INSIDE THE AZANIAN STRUGGLE

Along with this history of our international relations with the Azanian struggle, another point of departure came the first evening of the conference when a BCM(A) speaker seriously posed the following questions facing the movement. What is the relationship of organization to spontaneity? What does historic continuity mean for each generation? What is the relationship of consciousness to forms of organization among workers, women and students? And what characterizes the present moment of the struggle? However, it was his conclusion that "victory is not the question, time is the question," which permitted me to develop both historically and theoretically Marx's concept of revolution in permanence and its relationship to the self-determination of Third World revolutions.

The serious exchange of ideas that immediately followed and continued the next day revealed the theoretic depth the BCM activists are striving to attain. Thus, when African-American supporters and activists wanted to know what can be done in the U.S. the BCM organizers acknowledged the continued need for aid and support activities such as divestiture and boycotts. At the same time, they made it clear that the Black Consciousness philosophy wasn't only the articulation of a new stage of national consciousness, but a new conception of Black liberation — "self-generating, self-developing" — a conception which recognizes that the direction of the movement must come from the Black masses inside South Africa itself.

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LOS TIGRES