

# ARTS & LETTERS: REVIEWS

BLACK VIEWPOINT: Editor STEVE BIKO with contributions by: Njabulo Ndebele, C.M.C. Ndamase, Chief M.G. Buthelezi, B.A. Khoapa

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The viewpoints expressed in this book cover a wide range of thought and attitude. On the one hand, some writers advocate for the utilisation of the potential that is there were in the various black power-groups towards "a more meaningful participation in the shaping of our country's destiny". Ben Khoapa states that "a philosophy of liberation requires unity". Black unity in turn requires black organisation. "The viewpoint that is espoused here tallies with attempts made by some Black Organisations towards Black Solidarity".

Njabulo Ndebele gives a vivid exposition of white domination in his cogent analysis of what he terms "The

Problem" when he states that "the white race tries to minimise the conflict within and between its ethnic groups in order to maximise its efforts to dominate; it also tries to maximise the conflict within and between the ethnic groups of the oppressed Black race in order to minimise the latter's resistance in the racial conflict".

His examination of the position of Black power-groups in the political structure of this country gives a clear indication of what these black groups are worth in terms of the Black Man's struggle and on the other hand shows deficiency and lack of purpose that these groups are suffering from. His discussion points the way for these

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groups which is in fact the way for the Black Man.

It is well-known fact, when people are seeking to liberate themselves, that the enemy must be located and defined. The basic tenet of the Government policy in this country is white supremacy and white domination. This supremacy and domination make oppression and enslavement of the Black Man a reality. Therefore, by definition, white man, all white men become adversaries. However, it is true that some white individuals and organisations do make overtures to Black people regarding their problem and it is true that some Blacks are swayed by this attitude.

The Blacks who are misled by white liberals fail to realise that the amiability of a white emanates from some religious belief, social ethic or sheer human sympathy and never from total identification with the Black Cause. There are whites who have been in the Black struggle and they have been taken to be committed people. It is my contention that these whites were only interested in the removal of the present system of government so that they can implement the system they subscribe to as was the case, I think, with some members of the South African Communist Party.

This, once again becomes irrelevant to the Black Man's aspiration of shaping his own destiny. It becomes clear, therefore, that whites can be motivated by different ideals altogether other than those of the Black Man.

On the other hand there are views in this book that unashamedly violate the principle behind the argument above. These views are held by men who believe, in spite of the facts, that there is scope for "alleviating human suffering" within the policies structured by whites. This is what Gatsha Buthelezi believes in. He goes on to say that he has "great admiration for what American firms like Polaroid, I.B.M. and Pepsi Cola, and Banks like Barclays Bank and Standard Bank are doing in giving equal pay for equal work regardless of race".

Gatsha Buthelezi is, in fact, Chief of a "Black Labour Reservoir" - the Kwa-Zulu Bantustan. This is perhaps why he feels obliged to commend the attempt at an equitable distribution of privileges in the labour centres mentioned above. Gatsha Buthelezi knows that Black People are handicapped by legal structures-job reservation, influx control etc. Gatsha Buthelezi knows that the whole labour system is based on deliberate colonialist exploitation that debilitates the Black Man's involvement in relevant issues and makes him slave to the meagre salary he receives. In fact, this is very brilliantly put by Njabulo Ndebele in his contribution to this book when he analyses "characteristics of an advanced capitalist economy". Njabulo defines involvement in a capitalist economical structure as "a barren conformity to an impersonal acquisitive norm". He further asserts that "an acquisitive society is also characterised by its purposelessness". Gatsha Buthelezi's support for foreign investment enhances his status in his career perhaps but it is highly irrelevant to the Black Man's struggle. It is in fact highly detrimental to the struggle.

Mr. Ndamase makes a very feeble, in fact confused attempt at defining "A New Day". He alludes at Black Consciousness and warns that "wise men ignore this new development at their own peril". The philosophy that Mr. Ndamase is referring to is only relevant to Black Men and seeks to create a life-style that will channel the efforts and energy of the Black Man towards the realisation of his goals and aspirations without reference to white value

systems. But then Mr. Ndamase goes on to say that "The Black Man must be let to see and feel that he must make every effort possible in every way possible, to secure the friendship, the confidence, the co-operation of his white neighbour in South Africa". In another futile attempt to analyse the interrelated structure of Black and White he further alienates himself from the Black ideal. He contends that "the most intelligent in the University of Natal campus community has his intelligence darkened by the ignorance of fellow citizen in the backveld of Kwa-Zulu". He feels that whites "must help raise the character of the civilisation of the black man or theirs is lowered". Such debauchery from a man of Mr. Ndamase's apparent confidence is depressing. His ideas are the opposite of Ben Khoapa's analysis of the "New Black". Ben Khoapa feels that the philosophy of liberation must transcend the 'either integration or separation' dilemma which has had such a disastrous impact on white/Black policy. We are primarily concerned with the Liberation of the Black Man. All that is done will be adopted because it advances the cause of Black Liberation and all that which impedes this advancement should be rejected. We must hold all our ideas, ideals and involvement in this perspective.

The papers by Mr. Ndamase, Gatsha Buthelezi and Mr. Khoapa are essentially speaking to white people. Mr. Ndamase states that "black people are forced to labour under circumstances which are calculated not to inspire them with love and respect for labour". He goes on to say "the Black people will fight for the maintenance of their identity". What he says above is quite true. He is certainly not right when he says that "we should surely admit that we are one in this country" because here I agree with Njabulo Ndebele's assertion that a "nation presupposes a voluntary and unified political co-operation of all the social groups within a State". Mr. Ndamase solicits the white for help towards building "a great society". This is out of touch with Black aspirations of being master of his destiny.

Gatsha Buthelezi voices his misgivings about Government policy on Richards Bay quite vividly and properly. He does however make a declaration of his belief in uplifting Black people through the Homeland scheme because, he says "to me while South Africa battles in trying to make up her mind about the future, we should not forget that human lives are at stake here". This is once again a very unfortunate statement. It is not true that there is any good that Black people can reap from engaging in the sectionalist politics of this country if my assertion about all whites which includes the government, being adversaries is true. The point here is that they can never do or offer something, that can benefit the black man in terms of his struggle towards liberation.

Mr. Khoapa makes a relatively good definition of the "New Black" for white consumption. He makes an important point for Black Solidarity in the context of white domination which rules out any scope for collusion with whites. He states that "the oppressed can only bring about a future of universal brotherhood in proportion as they feel and exhibit group solidarity among themselves and cease to feel solidarity with the enemies of human solidarity".

As I said earlier, the ideas in this book and their form almost represent two extremes, and we must be careful in choosing which of the two are right and relevant.

JEEF DUMO BAQWA