

BOOK REVIEW

Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology. Gail Gerhart. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979. Paperback Edition, \$5.95.

Gerhart begins her study with the formation of the African National Congress (ANC) Youth League in the mid-1940s. She traces the enunciation of the ideology of Black nationalism in South Africa to this league. There were, of course, various earlier indications of such thought, but in restricting her analysis to a specific period these other developments are discounted. Thus there is hardly any reference to the All-African Convention (AAC) of the 1930s, apparently because it occurred before the time she considers significant for the study. Likewise, Tabata's assessment of the AAC and ANC (in The Awakening of a People) is not mentioned, although it is a contribution to Black nationalist thought.

Beginning with the disagreements that arose in the ANC over its tradition of multiracial alliances, Gerhart develops her study around the personality of Lembede, the foremost leader of the Youth League in the 1940s; she looks at the development of the "Africanists," as represented by Mda; the formation of "Pan-Africanists," led by Robert Sobukwe; and, finally, Black Consciousness, with Biko as the most prominent spokesman.

One stream of thought has not necessarily flowed from the others, though they are sequential. They have in common the theme of Africans taking the initiative for their own liberation by refusing to accept the racial pluralism of liberals and liberal-minded Africans. Steve Biko expressed this sentiment when he wrote:

Purely from a consideration of who we are, we realize that it is we who must be allowing others to participate in our system. We must not be the ones to be invited to participate in somebody else's system in our own private yard (p. 276).

This concern of the Black nationalists may be juxtaposed with the integrationist concerns of the ANC mainline that seeks acceptance in the framework designed by the Whites.

Gerhart weaves together the strands of Black Consciousness and Black nationalist thought through a study of personalities: Lembede, Mda, Sobukwe, and Biko. Certain problems result from this emphasis on the individual and personalities. Social for-

mations are relegated to a front chapter; we do not see the ways in which South African society is changing with each new development of the Black nationalist struggle. Little attention is given to the problems of organization that affected the different groups, and yet we may suppose that all of this was important to the formation of the ideology.

In the end, Black Consciousness is described as a movement to provide a new "psychology," rather than the beginning movement toward national liberation. Thus, Gerhart is not able to end her study by posing for us the question of the future relationship a national liberation movement will have with the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and the ANC. Instead, she can only suggest the possibility that "violence" (compared to what?!) will be seen as the "best way to achieve progress"; that Africans will "come to regard more destructive levels of violence as legitimate" (p. 309).

Gerhart sees the BCM as a "Children's Crusade," without calling it that. It is implied in her conclusion when she states that the youth of today will be the accommodationists of tomorrow (the "realists"). She recognizes, however, the unity of grass-roots organizations in BCM, and that workers carried out strikes in conjunction with student agitations, but she does not do so with a view to what this means for the future compared to the past.

Despite the weakness of Gerhart's analysis, which fails to make connections between the competition for power, social change, and mobilization, this book is valuable for being the first to bring into one place information about South African Black nationalist thought and personalities.

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