

# THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA: A PRODUCT OF THE ENTIRE BLACK WORLD

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**Abstract:** The paper illustrates how the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa can be diametrically tied up with the emergence of the Black Consciousness and Black-Power Movements in America. It goes further to demonstrate how, in the African context, the Black Consciousness Movement was given impetus by African nationalism and how that nationalism was later moulded and shaped by African thinkers of the 1950's and 1960's into Pan Africanism. The paper, will also try to show similarities and the disparities between Negritude African personality and the Black Consciousness Movement. The paper will again explain in a chronological manner how Garveyism, Black Consciousness in America and African Nationalism in Africa, African personality and Negritude contributed to the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. The study warns, that lack of understanding of these antecedents, could lead to confusion and total misinterpretation of this rather vital African concept. Lastly, the paper endeavours to highlight through the historicisation of the development, why the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa cannot be divorced from global influence.

**Keywords:** Black Consciousness Movement, Nationalism, Pan Africanism, South Africa.

## 1. THE ORIGIN OF AFRICAN NATIONALISM AND THE RISE OF THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

**A** contemplation of the rise of African nationalism in South Africa cannot be complete without considering all the forces that influenced it. This is a very rich part of South African history, which stretches as far back as the pre-colonial period. However,

unfortunately for our task here, we depend entirely on written sources, which confine us to the colonial period. A vast part of the African past from the period preceding the advent of Europeans in that part of the world due to lack of written material is not known. That seems to be the general scene everywhere in Africa and all over the world, where colonialism had left its mark. During the colonial time the whole of Africa was torn apart. A considerable number of Africans were taken away from Africa to places as far away as the two Americas. For a number of years these displaced people were culturally cut off from their lands of origin.<sup>1</sup>

In the absence of their own culture, they found themselves involved in a situation totally new and hostile. To adjust themselves to that new environment, they founded for themselves a culture, which was neither African nor European in nature. It became an appendage of the American culture, which was later described in different ways – Negroe-culture, Afro-American culture, or Black American culture. It was from that combination of cultures that the whole of Africa, America, Europe and especially the Caribbean Islands have been swept, causing Pan-Africanism to not simply contain the meaning of mere identification with Africa, nor physically going back to it<sup>2</sup>:

“It has been the rallying slogan, the springboard, the ideological vehicle for the common efforts of exiled Africans, West Indians and American Negroes to advance the cause of both Africa and the Africans. However, Pan-Africanism, like Joseph’s coat, is described in many colours; at no time have these variegated hues been more significant than now.”<sup>3</sup>

Allen wrote these words in the sixties, when the efforts of Pan-Africanism were beginning to

germinate on the African soil. These were the years of African liberation, while the drive towards freedom was very high.

## 2. THE PERIOD JUST PRECEDING THE ANGLO-BOER WAR OF 1899-1902 AND IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER

After 1652 the Africans did not fold their arms to watch the Europeans take their property and usurp their land. Major wars were fought, starting with the Khoisan Wars of resistance against settler expansionism in the Cape, to a number of wars between the Settlers and the ama-Xhosa. These were followed by a series of conflicts between the Basotho and the Boers. The Africans, although superior in numbers with their old methods of fighting, could not defeat the more sophisticated invaders. The ama-Zulu fought a fierce war in Natal against the Boers. It was the British who later defeated them.<sup>4</sup>

That period was followed by a number of brave attempts by the ama-Zulu to recapture their lost land. However, unfortunately after a series of set-backs the ama-Zulu were eventually forced to capitulate in 1906, during the Bambatha Uprisings. African Nationalism drew much strength and experience from those past wars with Europeans in South Africa. The Bambatha uprisings were very important in that they encouraged the formation of the African National Congress (ANC).

At the turn of the century, many things happened in South Africa, which were later to be the springboard for African Nationalism. During that period, White South Africa was at war and it was in the focal centre of international politics. It was exactly at this time that most of the former British and French Colonies were demanding autonomous status from their colonising countries. The War of 1899-1902 between the Boers and the British won the Boers' international sympathy against the British. Many countries supported the Afrikaner cause. The Africans were vacillating between the two combating forces. It was a white man's war, but the bravery and determination with which the Boers fought the superior British forces was admired by the Africans and that alone was enough to instil in them the desire for freedom. Boer resistance against British Imperialism encouraged African nationalism. The war was an eye-opener to the African combatants.

## 3. PAN AFRICANISM IN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS AS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

Looking back, we find that during that period elsewhere in the world, events which were to touch the African political scene were beginning to happen. It is generally accepted that Dr. Du Bois was the "father" of Pan-Africanism in the sense that he was the man who led that movement until it found acceptance as the basic ideology of emergent African Nationalism.<sup>5</sup> According to Padmore, the idea of Pan-Africanism first arose as a manifestation of fraternal solidarity amongst Africans and peoples of African descent. This great idea was originally conceived by a West-Indian barrister, Henry Sylvester William of Trinidad who practised at the English Bar at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. As an undergraduate, Williams established contact with many African dignitaries to the colonial office.<sup>6</sup> It was in Pan-Africanism that the idea of consciousness, self-actualisation, self-realisation and black-consciousness were born.

Africa was at that time going through a turbulent strain of crises. It was during this time that in South Africa the forces of racism were for the first time contemplating the idea of conniving against the Africans. The Boers had just lost a war against the British in 1902 and many of their people were still dying in concentration camps, which had been created by the British. On the other hand, as mentioned before, world opinion was due to that war mobilised against the British and for the Afrikaner. The case of the Africans was given no hearing at all. Countries like America, Canada, Australia and Germany were interested in the South African mining industry to such an extent, that little attention was given to the plight of the Africans.<sup>7</sup> The forces of colonialism were firmly entrenched in all corners of Africa:

"Africa then, as now, was going through a crisis. The old Bantu nations in South Africa were faced with racial conflict. The ancestral lands of these Africans were being threatened by the Boers and the Britons. The South African Charter Company of Cecil Rhodes was extending its tentacles into Central Africa. Even in West Africa, the Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir William Maxwell, was attempting to turn Fanti tribal lands into Crown property."<sup>8</sup>

### 3.1. Henry Sylvester Williams

It was in that atmosphere of uncertainty that Advocate Williams decided to call a Pan-African conference in London in 1900. The aim of the conference was to set up a forum of protest against colonialism, to co-ordinate their efforts with the missionaries and all abolitionist traditions of British people “to protect the Africans from depredations of the empire builders”.<sup>9</sup> Commenting on that meeting, George Padmore wrote:

“This meeting attracted attention, put the word ‘Pan-Africanism’ in the dictionaries for the first time, and had some thirty delegates, mainly from England and the West Indies, with a few coloured North-Americans. The conference was welcomed by the Lord Bishop Joseph Chamberlain, not to ‘overlook’ the interests and welfare of the native races”.<sup>10</sup>

The 1900 Pan-Africanist conference was indeed a foundation of African Nationalism in Africa. It was that conference which gave determination to actors on the African political stage. Mathurin referring to that conference had his to say:

“If like Garvey, Williams emphasized the organisation of local branches in the various parts of the Black world, it is also true that the Pan-African conference he organised in 1900 remained essentially the model for the later Pan-African conferences, first organised by W.E.B. Du-Bois and later George Padmore and Kwame Nkrumah, who became the leading organizer of these conferences.”<sup>11</sup>

Earlier, I mentioned how Williams made contact with the Africans. It was his friendship with John Tengo Jabavu (A South African) that led Williams to immigrate to South Africa in 1903. Williams had met Jabavu in London in 1899. A friend of his, Rawson Walter Wooding from Guyana, who came to South Africa in 1902, also encouraged him to come to South Africa. Perhaps the person who convinced him was one Mrs. Kinloch, a lady from Natal, with whom he had corresponded. Mrs. Kinloch inspired him to take an active interest in African problems and to form the African Association.<sup>12</sup>

What is interesting is that Williams became the second person of black origin to practice as an advocate in South Africa. On his arrival in Cape Town in 1903 he ran into a number of

difficulties. First, the Cape Law Society refused him entry as an advocate in the Cape of Good Hope Court. Being of African descent, William was classified as “Coloured”. Mahatma Gandhi (the first black lawyer) who came to South Africa in 1893, was also for some time denied admission to practice as a lawyer by the Natal Law Society. Gandhi was excluded from the Bar because the Natal Law Society questioned the authenticity of his qualifications. However, the Supreme Court decided in favour of both men against the respective Law Society.<sup>13</sup> The courage of both Gandhi and Williams opened new avenues for African Nationalism in South Africa. As will be seen later, it was members from that profession who later dominated the African political arena in South Africa<sup>14</sup>

Ghandi and Williams were a source of inspiration to the Black communities in South Africa. Writing about Williams’s admission to the Bar<sup>15</sup>, Mathurin says;

“That day marked as well a break-through for the Africans and Coloureds in the Cape Colony and the rest of South Africa ... The White English-language newspaper, *Cape Times* and *Cape Argus* both took note of the event. The admission of a black man to practice as an advocate must have been a major topic of conversation in home and club, shop, tavern, farm, and mission stations, church hall and army mess, the Africans and Coloureds. Whites would have been perturbed by this advance of “*Ethiopianism*” they dreaded, but had difficulty in defining.”<sup>16</sup>

Whilst in South Africa, Williams personally established himself as an advocate of equality and he was involved in national politics for the emancipation of the Black people, he was in contact with different political movements and he played a unifying role in times of serious disputes. Williams’s special area of concern was education, which at all times brought him into confrontation with the Union government. On the day of his inauguration, the *Cape Times* and *Cape Argus* expressed concern that his admission to the Bar would cause ill-feelings amongst the white population.

“Williams’s future course of action – his practical interest in the education of African and Coloured children, his defence of non-white people in courts, his advocacy of equal rights and of participation in all politics- could fit into the vague concept in the European mind of so-

called Ethiopianism, which they thought threatened white domination.”<sup>17</sup>

Williams was also deeply engaged in community work and it was that engagement that brought him into contact with members of the American Methodist Episcopal Church and the other African independent churches in South Africa. Six months after his arrival in the Cape, he was elected to be member of the Management Committee of the Wooding Private School – which his friend had established in 1902. He used his own chambers as a rendezvous for school board meetings. It was in one of those meetings, that Williams co-organized a protest mass meeting of Coloured people in March 1904, after only having spent half a year in South Africa. The protest was against the treatment of Coloured people in the Transvaal. According to the Tobin papers, the lives of the so-called Coloured people in the Transvaal were restricted in the following ways:

- “1. Their status was reduced to second-class citizenship under the law.
2. Their inability to hold property in their own names, which was held in trust for them by the government without whose permission they could not sell or transfer.
3. They could not use the general post-office in Johannesburg, but had to use a separate post-office.
4. They had to carry the pass and had to produce it on police demand and a permit costing one pound a year which entitled them to use the sidewalk without molestation. There were inequalities in separate marriage laws – a white man could marry a coloured woman and live with her, but if a coloured man lived with a white woman, they became subject to the so-called Immorality Act.”<sup>18</sup>

One point that characterised such meetings was the fact that the African people were not mentioned or invited. Although Williams supported the rights of all people in South Africa and was a staunch supporter of human equality, the reality of the South African situation confined his interests to the so-called Coloureds and people of Indian origin only. Thus, whatever the situation was, Williams was a good tactician who used such opportunities to advocate unity of all the oppressed peoples of South Africa. It was this element of his character which made Whites in South Africa to fear him. Except for the school-board activities in Cape Town, Williams’s work stretched out to

other nationwide problems. The division he saw amongst the oppressed in South Africa caused much concern in him. In one of the meetings with his school-board colleagues, Williams made his problem clear and known.<sup>19</sup>

Another problem which Williams had to face was that created by the Moslem political group in the Cape. These groups were influenced by Mr. Leander Starr Jameson. He had made certain promises to them as a group. The Moslem association headed by Hadjie H. N. Effendi decided not to join Williams’s unity movement – the South African Citizens Defence Committee, as the group was named.<sup>20</sup> Effendi reported that the reason why they did not join was: “Because they believed in the word of ‘Doctor Jim’ ”<sup>21</sup>. Dr Jameson, according to Effendi as quoted by Mathurin had written to Effendi on 20th September 1903, promising: “equal rights to all civilized men” with the exclusion of Africans, for he wrote: “It was only the aboriginal natives we consider uncivilised”<sup>22</sup>.

Having run a successful practice and having been politically engaged in South Africa, Williams returned to London. He had left a mark on the South African political scene and his work and courage influenced future generations in South Africa.

### 3.2. Marcus Garvey

The next era is that of Marcus Garvey. Unlike Du-Bois, Williams and Padmore, Marcus Garvey was obsessed with the racial problems of the day and that alone brought him into conflict with other Black American leaders. His politics were vacillating between pure nationalism and racism. According to Padmore, Garvey at times boasted of having taught fascism to Mussolini:

“We were first Fascist. We had disciplined men, women and children in training for the liberation of Africa. These Black masses saw that in this extreme nationalism lay their hope and readily supported it. Mussolini copied fascism from me, but the Negro reactionary sabotaged it.”<sup>23</sup>

Garvey’s extremist philosophy drove him into the open arms of the Negrophobes of the *Ku-Klux-Klan*, John Powel and E.S. Cox. Padmore writes that these two Klan-members frequently addressed Garvey’s meetings, supporting his *Back to Africa Movement*<sup>24</sup>. The Klan generally

hated the ideas put forth by Du-bois and his colleagues. They supported Garvey's movement, because they hoped that his *Back to Africa Movement* would solve the American problem in the South and it would eventually rid them of the Blacks. Garvey's attitude and politics antagonised Du-Bois and Padmore. For example Padmore did not find any difference between Garvey and Malan of South Africa. Garvey, like Dr Malan believed in "racial purity," the point of departure between them being that Boers sought purity of the White race and the Negro that of the Black.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand it is worth mentioning that Garvey's extreme ideas were products of the racially divided society in which he grew up. Garvey saw how the men of mixed origin constituted themselves into a middle class, whereas white men made up the upper class.

The black men, Garvey's people, were on the bottom rung. It would be folly to try to suggest that in South Africa such a situation does not prevail. In fact, one of the realities of the South African situation was racial disharmony which one sees and feels between the oppressed people themselves. Here, I mean the Africans, so called Coloureds and Indians. It is this schism that was usually manipulated by the powers that be to encourage permanent disunity. I will also argue that Garvey's philosophy could receive fertile grounds in such extreme cases of racial oppression. It is also true that the ANC in 1912 did not include the so-called Coloureds and Indians. It was only later, in the history of that movement that the Indians and so-called Coloureds were included. That could also explain the assumption that Garvey's theories somehow found expression in the liberation movement in South Africa. The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in South Africa grew out of the tension and suspicion between the oppressed peoples which eventually led to unity. Commenting on Garvey, Du-Bois says: "... Garvey proved not only an astonishingly popular leader, but a master of propaganda. Within a few years, news of his movement, of his promises and plans, reached Europe and Asia and penetrated every corner of Africa."<sup>26</sup>

Later in this work it will be shown how Garveyism penetrated South Africa and how it formed one of the most important topics of debate, as the struggle for emancipation in that part of Africa was unfolding. Garvey used slogans like "Africa for Africans" and the same

slogans were heard in the ANC Youth League in the 1940s, emphasizing African nationalism as their ideology. In the ANC slogan *mayibuye i-Afrika* (which means that Africa should be returned to its rightful owners), the influence of Garveyism is glaringly present. The Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), as would be seen later, carried on with the Youth League tradition of African nationalism. But the Garveyist philosophy was slightly modified to make room for all the oppressed peoples and those Whites who identified themselves with the African cause. At the inauguration of the PAC in 1959, Mangaliso Sobukwe, the founding president of the PAC, said: "Politically we stand for a government of the Africans for the Africans by the Africans, with everybody who owes loyalty only to Africa and accepts the democratic rule of an African majority, being regarded as an African."<sup>27</sup>

The Black Consciousness of the mid-sixties and the seventies took a step further by putting more emphasis on the word "Blackness". The BCM, like the PAC insisted on the question of black leadership and self-reliance and all these were embodied in their slogan: "*Black man you are on your own*". Blackness according to them did not connote the pigmentation of one's skin but it was an attitude, a state of mind and that is, anybody who identifies himself with the Black man's struggle is black. Blackness became synonymous to being oppressed. The PAC and BCM in South Africa were of course not the first to come up with group-cohesion as rallying points of the struggle.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.3 Edward Wilmont Blyden

Garvey, as pointed out, was not the only man of his time who propagated the ideas of Pan-Africanism. Perhaps one of the most brilliant propounders of that dream and the man who helped to formulate it into an ideology was W.E.B. Du-Bois. There were many other Black intellectuals who appeared on the stage before him. The name Edward Wilmont Blyden is important. Writing about Blyden, Ntongela Masilela says: "Edward Blyden, according to his biographer advanced the view that Blacks all over the world have a history and culture of which they could be proud of and that with the help of New World Negroes could be developed."<sup>29</sup>

Blyden's vision was triggered by the events in America itself. Although after the American

Civil War of 1860-1865, the American Blacks were emancipated, politically and socially they remained oppressed.<sup>30</sup> Commenting on this Ntongela Masilela says: “Their treatment as despised second class citizens by the American society would compel them to emigrate to Liberia, which was then seen as liberated Africa. This vision was to prove short-lived as then seen as the then recently emancipated slaves refused to emigrate to Liberia or to Africa generally.”<sup>31</sup>

As Masilela puts it: “Blyden was possessed of a vision of a regenerated Africa”. Blyden wanted to restore to the Black man his past. He was desperately trying to give integrity to the Negro race and “its inherent attributes, which it should strive to project in a distinctive ‘African Personality’ ”.<sup>32</sup> In search for African identity, Blyden visited Egypt in 1866. Blyden wanted to prove the involvement of Black Africans in the early civilization of Egypt. Blyden supported his arguments on historical evidence provided by the tenth chapter of Genesis, using the original Hebrew version of the Bible. He also used the works of Homer and Herodotus (in Greek original), as well as evidence from comparative philosophy.<sup>33</sup>

The information he came up with and his approach to it soon created controversies. It is however from the recent archaeological works of Cheik Anta Diop that Blyden’s thesis is supported. Blyden laid a foundation which influenced many scholars in Africa and the whole world. At that stage scholars like Cheik Anta Diop, even went further to maintain that Egyptian Civilization was the creation and contribution of Africans rather than constructed with the help of Africans as Edward Blyden contended.<sup>34</sup>

These hard Pan-Africanist views of Diop stirred provocation in the ranks of Pan-Arabic scholars of Africa and worldwide. Blyden wrote books and published a lot of articles and essays and amongst his works, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* and *African Life and Customs* is the best-known. Blyden wanted to instil the Afro-American and the African with an African Personality distinct from that created and portrayed by European philosophers and nationalists like Herder, Fichte, Hegel and Mazzini<sup>35</sup>. Masilela maintains that:

“He saw the European character as harsh, individualistic, competitive and combative; the European society as highly materialistic, and the worship, and the worship of science and industry as replacing that God of Africa; the African character, for Blyden is characterised by sympathy, empathy and that the special contribution of the African to civilisation would be special and a spiritual one”.<sup>36</sup>

It was this concept of “African Personality“, which was to have a profound influence not only on Nkrumah but on the whole of the African continent. Blyden’s ideas were echoed throughout the whole of the whole black world. Although Blyden was a great scholar, some of the ideas he proposed did not agree with the African personality he was trying to reconstruct. His support of Islamic penetration of Africa makes his arguments shaky to some African scholars in that Islam also disfigured the African past.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.4 W.E.B Du-Bois

The next Black American whose ideas directly and indirectly influenced the African continent was W.E.B Du-Bois. Du-Bois like Nkrumah was profoundly influenced by Blyden’s concept of an African Personality. According to Masilela Du-Bois considered Blyden as “the prophet of the renaissance of the Negro race”.<sup>38</sup> Comparing Du-Bois with Blyden, Masilela goes further to say:

“Whereas the intellectual formation of Edward Wilmont Blyden lies in the era between the American Civil War (1860 -1865) and the Reconstruction (1870-80), that of W.E.B Du-Bois lies beyond that of the reconstruction era Du-Bois, in relation to Africa saw his task as the continuation of the legacy of the great Edward Blyden”<sup>39</sup>

Unlike Garvey, Du-Bois did not advocate the “Back to Africa” philosophy. He believed that the American Blacks have a right to remain in America which they helped develop. He did not share the ideas of Garvey on the question of “purity of African descent”. Although there was no love lost between Garvey and him, Du-Bois did not regard Garvey’s political engagement as a passing storm. He says of the “Back to Africa Movement”:

“It was grandiose and bombastic scheme, utterly impracticable as a whole, but it was sincere and

had some practical features, and Garvey proved not only an astonishing popular leader, but a master of propaganda. Within a few years, news of his movement, of his promises and plans, reached Europe and Asia and penetrated every corner of Africa."<sup>40</sup>

Du-Bois was a pragmatist, an intellectual of outstanding stature and a reader, whereas Garvey was a dreamer and idealist. First Du-Bois sought to dispel the notion that Africa and Africans had no history worthy of serious consideration. He was in fact using this as his point of departure, ideas already propounded by Blyden. With his provocative essays, he challenged those black American intellectuals of his generation who despised Africa. He moved right into the centre of that epoch and became a moving spirit of the Harlem-Renaissance.

His presence in the political arena had a conscientizing effect on the Black American Intellectuals. In his three books: *The Negro* (1919), *Black Folk, Then and Now* (1939) and *The World and Africa*, like Blyden he was seeking to reconstruct the African past. What makes Du-Bois more important than others, was the direct contact he had with many African Intellectuals, nationalists and students. Through the Pan-Africanist Movement he managed to bridge the gap between Black America and Africa. In his essays of the late 1950's and early sixties as Masilela puts it: "he celebrates the independence of African countries as the triumph of Pan-Africanist philosophy and ideology".<sup>41</sup>

Du-Bois was the convenor and organiser of the 1919 Pan-Africanist Conference in Paris, but the man who worked hard to make the conference a success was the Senegalese, Blaise Diagne, a deputy in the French National Assembly. Diagne and many other delegates from Africa attended the conference. Before this conference, Du-Bois had already made contact with South Africans, for example, Charlotte Maxeke, an African woman, who later became instrumental "in introducing the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church, an offshoot of the Black American AME Church to South Africa".<sup>42</sup> Du-Bois met her whilst he was employed as a teacher in Wilberforce University in Cleveland, Ohio, which was run by the AME church. There were also other students from South Africa in the same university.<sup>43</sup>

#### 4. THE PAN AFRICANIST MOVEMENT AND HOW IT INFLUENCED THE SOUTH AFRICAN MILIEU

The 1919 Pan-Africanist Conference opened new avenues for the advancement of its ideology, in that the number of Africans who identified themselves with its aims and objectives increased. That was proved by the overwhelming majority of Africans who turned up in subsequent conferences of the Pan-African Movement. At the 1945 Manchester Conference there was a relatively large number of delegates from Africa: Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana); Du-Bois and George Padmore also participated.<sup>44</sup> The similarities between the resolutions of that Conference and the programme of the Unity of Movement of South Africa which from the beginning looked at the South African situation not only from a racial view point, but also from a class standpoint, are striking. The Youth League Programme put more weight on race rather than class analysis or both. The views of the Youth League were very Africanist and nationalist in nature. Meli quotes Brian Bunting with reference to Anton Muzwakhe Lembede: "Before he died at the tragically early age of 33, Lembede had also changed his attitude towards the Communist Party."<sup>45</sup>

Lembede rejected communism, and did not believe that a Non-European-front is practicable. He held the Garveyist views of Africa and opposed solidarity with the so-called Coloureds and Indians. Lembede was the brain behind the activities of the Youth League. The political shift suggested by Meli looks even more impossible in that even after Lembede's death, the League continued with the same programme, ignoring class analysis. Coming back to the resolutions of the Conference in Manchester, it was decided:

"We affirm the right of all colonial peoples to control their own destiny. All colonies must be free from foreign imperialist control, whether political or economic ... The object of imperialist powers is to exploit. The Fifth Pan African Congress thereof calls on the workers and farmers of the colonies to organise effectively. Coloured workers must be in the front of the battle against imperialism. We also call upon the intellectuals and professional classes of the colonies to awaken their responsibilities ... Colonial and people of the world unite!"<sup>46</sup>

On the question of Marxist analysis as the quotation above indicates, the African National Congress (ANC) and its Youth League were not keen. Any such views could only be heard from Africans who were members of the South African Communist Party (SACP). Although the Unity Movement<sup>47</sup> as mentioned before was Marxist in nature it did not believe in the activities of the SACP which it viewed with suspicion. The SACP was predominantly white and was not trusted by the ANC, the Youth League or the Unity Movement.

The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), although there to accelerate African emancipation, did not always do this. The PAC was an international body and it had a global outlook. Moreover, its members were intellectuals who varied from country to country as to their political, social, cultural and ideological commitments. Here was a group of people painstakingly trying to come together and to forge one identity. Whilst the Congress was capable of forging the desired cultural unity, individual African countries had their own peculiar problems which could only be solved by such African countries themselves.

Above all, the delegates of the Pan-Africanist Congress represented divergent political ideologies – there were African socialists, African nationalists, Stalinists, Marxist, Leninists and Trotskyites. Everybody went to these conferences to propagate and defend his own particular standpoint ideologically. But amazingly, it was from that confusion that some progress was made to spearhead the African cause. Perhaps the man who came closest to the solution was Padmore, "... who concluded that in their struggle for emancipation the colonial peoples could rely only on themselves..."<sup>48</sup> C L R James says that Padmore was set towards: "the originator of the movement to achieve the political independence of the African countries and people of African descent"<sup>49</sup>

In all these conferences organised by the International Pan-Africanist Congress, Padmore did not only meet South African intellectuals, he actively engaged himself in debates concerning the plight of Blacks in South Africa. He was born in Trinidad in the Caribbean in 1903. Later in his life he studied in the United States. In the 1920s he joined the Communist Party of the United States, becoming an official of the third International. He became a leading Black in

African Affairs.<sup>50</sup> "Following a six month imprisonment in 1933 in Nazi Germany, he broke with the Communist in opposition to its adaptation towards the British, French and the USA colonialist powers – a turn which Padmore regarded correctly as treacherous to Black interest everywhere", Trehwela maintains.

I believe this decision made Padmore to have a different view of Africa from most of his contemporaries. Zolile Keke, a leading activist within the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) correctly extols him as the "Father of African Emancipation".<sup>51</sup> In his book, "*Pan Africanism or Communism?*" Padmore writes extensively about the hypocrisy of the CPSA towards the African struggle in South Africa. He became extremely popular amongst African students in Africa. At the University of Fort Hare in South Africa Padmore's views found acceptance in the mind of Robert Sobukwe, who later became the first president of the PAC in South Africa. About this event Trehwela writes: "Padmore died in 1959, at the age of 56, six months after the formation of the PAC under the leadership of Sobukwe – a political development that had his warmest encouragement – and six months before the massacre at Sharpeville."<sup>52</sup>

Sobukwe was like Mandela, Tambo and Lembede a founder-member of the ANC Youth League. His pro-Padmore feelings may probably have been shared by other Youth-Leagues, in particular, Mandela, Tambo and Lembede. They were all militant and they hated the involvement of the CPSA in African affairs. That is why Mandela and Tambo in the 1940s proposed the expulsion of communists from the ANC. This was in reaction to a decision by the President of the ANC, Dr AB Xuma to allow black communists to join the ANC as individual members.<sup>53</sup> For some other reason of political expediency, however Mandela and Tambo revoked their decision and worked with the communists at a later stage. What is interesting here is that even Dr. Xuma in his earlier days co-operated with the communists but for a different reason. Paul Trehwela commenting on the death of Albert Nzula and Dr. Xuma's attitude towards the communists says:

"Nzula's second problem was his growing disillusionment with the Soviet system. When he was drunk, he was most prone to come out with his Trotskyite and anti-Stalinist sentiments. Mofutsanyana did not specify how he picked up

these views ( he guessed it may have been his associates at Profintern ( Red International of Trade Unions ) , or which ideas of Trotsky he was expounding but what he remembers most was Nzula's questioning of Stalin's leadership. He recollected that at one time Nzula reminded him of a meeting in Sophiatown at which Dr AB Xuma, a conservative African National Congress figure had spoken. Xuma had launched an attack on the Soviet government charging that in the USSR all cars were not owned by the workers, but by Stalin. Nzula has taken on Xuma at the meeting, but now that he had lived in the USSR he was regretting his former stance."<sup>54</sup>

The above citation is important in that it shows the contradictions which prevailed in individuals in their endeavour to understand and to implement foreign ideologies in the African situation. Nzula, a devout communist and a brilliant African scholar, became utterly disillusioned with the Party and he was developing Trotskyite ideas. I B Tabata who was then a leading personality of the All-African Convention remarks:

"Every time there is political excitement over some oppressive measure, the Communist Party is the first to set up a hue and cry against it ... They either organise the people around the Communist Party or committee in which their own men play a leading part; when the campaign comes to an end they dissolve the ad hoc body – but with a few new recruits to the credit of the Communist Party."<sup>55</sup>

Tabata later became the president of the Unity Movement of South Africa – a renowned Trotskyite organisation in South Africa. Padmore was also a member of the Comintern and he played a vital role in its policies towards Africa, until he became frustrated with Moscow. In Moscow, Padmore worked and rubbed shoulders with many Africans, especially Nzula from South Africa who later saved his life when the Stalinists wanted to kill him. At about that time, South Africans like Moses Kotane who later became a general secretary of CPSA and Mofutsanyana, a leading South African Communist, were also studying in Moscow. Besides his personal friendship with Nzula, Padmore's writings influenced the historical events in South Africa. At the time of his death, he was a political advisor to Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana.<sup>56</sup>

When the PAC was formed in 1959, Nkrumah welcomed the event. The BCM that emerged in the 1960s was a direct product of Padmore's ideas. In the same tone, the BCM rejected white participation in their movement, they also did not see any relevance in experimenting with what they termed, "Foreign Ideologies". They believed that the Black man should rely on himself and *only* himself for his liberation – hence the slogan "*Blackman you are on your own*".<sup>57</sup> What happened in South Africa in the late sixties should not be seen as an isolated case. It forms part of a series of events which affected Africa and the whole black world. The Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa must be seen in the context of black emancipation.

Along with Garvey, Williams, Blyden, Du-Bois and Padmore there were many other great names whose ideas contributed to the emergence of Black Consciousness in South Africa. One of the greatest thinkers of that time was Frantz Fanon from Martinique. Frantz Fanon's mind penetrated the whole of Africa and the world. When one reads the speeches delivered by Steve Biko and his co-propounders of Black Consciousness, one finds a lot of quotations from Fanon's works, especially "*The Wretched of the Earth and the Black Skins, White Masks*." Frantz Fanon influenced many other writers of African origin. His works were mostly directed at decolonizing the mind. In the works of Ngugi Wa Thiongo of Kenya and Chinwezi of Nigeria, his influence is obvious. In most of Ngugi's works but in particular his "*Decolonizing the Mind*" and Chinwezi's "*Europe and the Rest of Us*," this influence is obvious. The two African writers were also widely read during the rise of Black Consciousness. Biko's "*I Write what I like*" is a classical example of the impact Fanon had on the BCM.

In 1956, another conference took place in Paris. It was attended by many black writers and artists. South Africa was represented by Gerald Sekoto. In this conference, Fanon read a paper titled *Racism and Culture* in which he tried to demonstrate how through national liberation struggle of the oppressed and dispossessed, racism and all other forms of prejudice could be dispelled and how cultures of the dominant indigenous people could be revived and made to profoundly flourish in their authenticity.<sup>58</sup> The highlight of the conference was in fact the intellectual confrontation between Richard

Wright and Aime Cesaire. The latter, was one of Biko's favourite writers. In a book called "*Black Power*", Wright's analysis of the Ghanaian culture was an unfortunate misrepresentation. Richard Wright, an able writer, was in that conference swimming against the tide. It was his conclusion, in a paper titled, *Tradition and Industrialisation* that rocked the boat, when he said: "Thank you, Mr White man, for freeing me from the rot of my irrational traditions and customs, though you are still victim of your own irrational customs and traditions."<sup>59</sup> Richard Wright was a typical example of a black writer who did not think that there was something to be gained from African culture which he simply dismissed as backward, irrational, primitive, and stagnant. Wright was not alone – his sentiments were shared by many black intellectuals in America and elsewhere in the world, who had never had any direct contact with Africa. It is interesting to note that in that debate, the South African, Gerald Sekoto, was one of the few who supported Wright. It was not only Aime Cesaire who responded to this paper, James Baldwin reacted negatively to Wright's thesis.

Aime Cesaire's presentation at the conference read: "*Culture and Colonization*" – which Masilela takes to be a follow-up of his 'brilliant book', "*Discourse on Colonialism*" in which he had equated racial discrimination with neo-colonialism. In that book, Cesaire argues that the culture of Black peoples had been shifted, bastardized, corrupted by the nature of colonialism. Cesaire ended his presentation by saying: "The shortest road to the future is always the one that goes through the thorough study of the past ... This conference urges practical conditions for the revival and growth of negro culture."<sup>60</sup> Masilela continues that the interconnection between history and culture which Blyden had argued for, nearly a century earlier, was being continued by Aime Cesaire, albeit in different historical circumstances. It was in keeping with this that a decade later Steve Biko said: "Our culture must be defined in concrete terms. We must relate the past to the present and demonstrate a historical evolution of the modern African. We must reject the attempts by the powers that be to project an arrested image of our culture."<sup>61</sup>

The significance of these conferences was that they created platforms from which peoples of African descent could collectively seek one another and share their problems. It was not

only the question of black American looking down upon African culture, but there was also a tendency from some African writers to undermine African-American culture too. John Pepper Clark, a Nigerian playwright and novelist, demonstrated his lack of understanding of the cultures by saying:

"The real quarrel is that most Negro writers see their subject at one point and position only – that of protest and prayer. As a result and perhaps without intention of doing so, they have helped to create and establish a fresh set of stereotype figures and faces capable of expressing only certain simple emotion and gestures, none of which has to do with anything complex or cerebral or with the mystery and permanence of the mask."<sup>62</sup>

Masilela, summing up the absurdity of the above statement and the misunderstanding that it created in that conference writes:

"The absurdity of such a judgement needs no further commenting. These misunderstandings and misreadings of each other's cultures, between us Africans and Afro-Americans, can be overcome through a deep historicisation of our culture and experiences. It is a question of connecting struggles."<sup>63</sup>

## 5. THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Another strong external factor which inspired the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa was the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's and the 1960's. It was not exactly the same thing in that (as Bishop Tutu puts it in the film: "*Witness to Apartheid*"), the Black Americans had the law on their side whereas in South Africa, the Black Consciousness Movement had to work against the law which by its very nature was made to be against the blacks and the struggling masses. There are however many parallels which could be drawn between the two movements. Another factor was that the Civil Rights Movement was actually aimed at the equitable sharing of all rights as they stand in the constitution of America. So theirs was a Civil Rights Movement in the true sense of the word.

The Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa had to align itself with the liberation movements which were fighting for the total

emancipation of the black people of South Africa. The only common grounds between the Black Consciousness and the American Civil Rights Movement were that they were both committed to non-violent solutions and they operated legally and above ground. The idea of Black Consciousness and the organisation it inspired are themselves direct products of bans and prohibitions of the Apartheid regime. The concept of Black Consciousness and its emphasis on Black Nationalism was not a new proposition nor was it directly derived from the Black Power Movement in America (that only inspired it).<sup>64</sup>

The South African concept of Black Consciousness contributed new techniques to the concept in the sense that the propounders of that idea in South Africa tried to fuse theory and action. It was the daring and innovative spirit of the BCM that made it succeed where others failed. Mangaliso Sobukwe, of the PAC privately confided to a friend that he and his colleagues in the PAC had preached the concept of consciousness but the Black Consciousness Movement of the late 60s and 70s had a better way of explaining it. Although in essence, Black Consciousness is the same as others before it, it differed greatly in its organisational structures. *Ikwezi*, a black liberation journal of Southern Africa looks at the BCM this way:

“Thus did the Black Consciousness Movement arise. The Black Consciousness Movement is a South African phenomenon *per excellence*. It arose from the material conditions of life of the black people in South Africa not, of course, without the influence of international factors which might have acted as triggering mechanism, e.g. the American Blacks’ Civil rights movement and glorious victories won by the struggling peoples over Portuguese imperialism.”<sup>65</sup>

After the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, many South Africans left the country. Some went into exile whilst others needed a breathing space out of the tension-packed South African situation. A great number of them went to the USA for different reasons. Some went there for study purposes with an aim of returning to South Africa. A sizable number of these people returned to South Africa, in the mid and late sixties. They brought with them experience of organisational skills which they had learned from the American Civil Rights Movement. Some of them wrote books which stimulated the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement. A

group of them subscribed to Martin Luther King’s peaceful movement.<sup>66</sup>

They admired his oratory, rhetoric and above all his methods of protest. Some followed the methods of the more radical Malcolm X and his Black Panther Movement. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X became the topic of the townships in South Africa. Black Power was influencing the situation in South Africa. Underground literature concerning Black Power in America was circulated, particularly amongst students and black intellectuals. In drinking-halls and shebeens one could hear hot discussions about the American Civil Rights Movement and the need in South Africa for a similar movement. The Black Power message had many channels through which it could reach the people in South Africa.<sup>67</sup>

In the music scenario, black jazz became very popular. The black American spiritual music, featuring singers like Mahalia Jackson dominated the scene. Voices of a new brand of soul-singer came out with songs like *I am Black and I am proud, Say It Loud, Why lord* etc. Back in America, black South Africans were fully engaged in the movement. Miriam Makeba, a world renowned South African singer married a Black-Panther leader, Stokeley Carmichael. There were also other contributory factors which drew the struggle of the black people in South Africa closer to the struggling people in other parts of the world. America was deeply involved in the Vietnam War and in America there was the growth of the anti-Vietnam-War campaign and an increasing international support for liberation movements.<sup>68</sup>

When the people of Vietnam eventually won the war, in 1975, the struggling masses in South Africa joined in the jubilation and that triumph inspired young poets, like Mafika Gwala<sup>69</sup> to write:

“In 1979, I did a long poem, *Tribute For Nguyen Giap*. And I read it to Ngoye students. They seemed to like it, I had to leave photostat copies for some. Then I sent it to *Atlantic Review*, Oregon. The editor asked me to consider Viet Cong atrocities against Vietnamese populace, obviously referring to those who were camp followers of American genocidal marines, the Boat people had come to being.”<sup>70</sup>

## 6. EUROPEAN STUDENTS UNRESTS – THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN SETUP

In the 1960s there were student unrests almost throughout the world. According to Meli, French students at that time nearly brought the de Gaulle government down. In 1968, a student demonstration rocked West-Berlin and the whole of the Federal Republic of Germany. This was a year before the formal inauguration of SASO in South Africa. The events had a tremendous effect on black students in South Africa who followed with great interest. Surely, black students identified themselves with these student upheavals. The victories of European students became the victory of black students in Africa and elsewhere in the world. These incidents sparked off a whole chain of political disasters in South Africa, at the centre of which stood the South African government.

## 7. NEGRITUDE AND THE AFRICAN PERSONALITY

The concept of Black Consciousness in South Africa and its growth amongst the students and the intellectuals was a valid pointer, in that it indicated an important break-down in the socialisation process. The Black Consciousness concept borrowed much from Negritude. The Negritude notion played a vital role in the pre-independence political struggles in Africa. Negritude stressed the question of blackness as the nucleus of its political programme. It differed from Black Consciousness which tended to give a new meaning to the term “black” and according to the BCM philosophy, “black” did not mean the colour of one’s skin, but meant “an attitude or a state of mind”. A white man who identified himself fully with the black cause would qualify to be referred to as black – a point which was missing in the Negritude movement. The objective of the pre-independence African liberation movements was to overthrow the colonial rulers, and to do that, the leaders had to use slogans and inculcate new political and ideological principles. Negritude was one of them. Negritude failed in that it obscured some of the most fundamental problems facing Africa then. In his *The Eye of the Needle*, Richard Turner writes:

“The role played by Negritude in this process was an ambiguous one. Its central orientation – black is as good as, if not better than white – helped to articulate the idea of independence and

mobilise the people against foreign domination. But the very stress helped to obscure certain problems of post-independence society. In particular it implied that the common interest, which united all the people against colonialization would continue after independence. It tended to idealise the egalitarian tribal past and thus obscured the fact that colonisation had brought class differentiation to Africa.”<sup>71</sup>

The Black Consciousness movement in South Africa also started from this false premise. Although they differed from Negritude, they did not believe in class analysis. In fact, what Nyerere said in 1962 that “the idea of class or caste was non-existent in Africa”, was reiterated by Steve Biko later in many of his speeches.

The black student organisation, SASO, unlike Negritude recognised that what needed is not the “assimilation of Blacks into an already established set of norms drawn up and motivated by white society but the creation of a new type of society embodying new values”. It seems that *Presence Africaine*, a publication which was launched by West-African Diaspora in Paris was a response to *Presence Francaise*, which was a cultural movement aimed at spreading French culture all over the French Empire. *Presence Africaine* did not endeavour to counteract the powerful impact of the French culture but tried to make the African culture be assimilated into the French cultural achievement. It did not come from the masses, but from the African intellectuals in Paris. The fact here is that the masses in West-Africa did not need it for they had and lived with their culture. For the masses, Negritude did not bring anything new. Answering the question: “What is the reaction of the masses to Negritude?” Professor Hill said at a Pan-Africanist Congress held at the University of Pennsylvania in 1962 that “Negritude is emotional to the masses and intellectual to more sophisticated Africans”<sup>72</sup>. But Mr. Enwonwou looked at Negritude more positively:

“Negritude is for him a kind of fighting faith of a superior quality with a high mission to perform; it is the sustaining spirit in a historical fight; its influence is in the culture and will naturally assert itself. He remarked however, that there is the artist’s conception and the more general, more comprehensive layman’s conception of it. The two are not synonymous.”<sup>73</sup>

Mphahlele of South Africa, who also attended this conference, dismissed Negritude as a “vague ambiguous philosophical concept”.<sup>74</sup> Turner maintains that several SASO leaders have referred to the Negritude concept with approval. Negritude was a reality and it had an impact on African Nationalism. It affected peoples lives through-out the whole of Africa. The racist situation like that of Apartheid South Africa, could only create fertile grounds for its spread. Alioune Diop summarises Negritude and African personality as two products of the same. He maintains:

“Pan Africanism was launched here (in America) and was of an essentially intellectual nature. Many years after its birth, the African peoples and their leaders – some of their leaders – took hold of Pan-Africanism and made an elaborate doctrine of it, adapted to our aspirations and our situation. Each country or each cultural region has its terminology; in France, we invented Negritude (negro-ness); in the Anglo Saxon countries Pan –Africanism; and together, we launched another expression with the same perspective the African personality.”<sup>75</sup>

The Black Consciousness movement in South Africa was therefore another new expression with the same perspective – the African personality. Since the bulk of literature of the BCM produced was directed to the black man in South Africa, the tendency was the same; the trend of seeking for and reviving the black or African personality which was the target of the Pan Africanist movement and Negritude. Black Consciousness was in many ways a continuation of the concept of Negritude which was established by two poets, Aime Cesaire and Leopold Senghor.

The works of both men were read widely during the rise of Black Consciousness in South Africa. *Black Orpheus* launched by Ulli Beier in Nigeria was a response to Negritude. It published many articles in which the African personality, Pan Africanism and Negritude were debated. *Black Orpheus* encouraged the spread of the African nationalism in that way. Mphahlele was one of the leading personalities whose works were printed in *Black Orpheus*.

## 8. THE AFRICAN CONTRIBUTION

Africa in the 1950s and 1960s became the focal centre of international politics as it was going

through the decolonisation process. There were certain other larger issues which the discussion of Pan – Africanism shaped. It had been indicated that the international tenets of Pan-Africanism, was conceived in America. Its protagonists were black Americans, West-Indians and exiled Africans. Pan Africanism was taken home to Africa where it was embodied to a great degree in it the nationalism that served as a vehicle for African emancipation<sup>76</sup>. Africa was at that time blessed with a very powerful leadership which was in many respects united. These were : Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Leopold Senghor of Senegal ; Sekou-Toure of Guinea, Nyerere of Tanzania; Amilcar Cabral of Guinea Bissau; Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia ; Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe of South Africa; Anton Muzwake Lembede of South Africa, Steve Bantu Biko of South Africa, Azikiwe of Nigeria; Patrice Lumumba of Congo and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya.

At all the conferences of Pan-Africanism there was an expression of concern about the plight of the oppressed in Africa, and South Africa was always the centre point of such deliberations. The settler governments watched what was happening with concern. Allen tells us that in South East Africa, there was an effort by settlers to establish a federation which would assure them control. In the early part of the century, Jan Smuts proposed a form of “Pan Africanism” which he thought would safeguard the white man’s interest in Africa. This development was however short-lived. On the African side of the African nationalism the leading spirit was Nkrumah. Nkrumah’s dream was an Africa united both politically and economically. For Nkrumah a call for freedom not coupled with economic independence was not enough. He had an unrelenting hatred towards imperialism. As a thinker and politician, Nkrumah contributed much, not only to the liberation of Ghana but to Africa as a whole.

Nkrumah’s determination to fight colonialism and imperialism grew during his student days in America. When he moved to London, his dream was half-fulfilled, because that was a conducive place for his ideas. At the 1945 Manchester Pan African Conference, Nkrumah demonstrated his talents as a thinker and politician. It was in that conference that a memorandum was drawn up and presented to King George VI in protest against the treatment of Africans in South

Africa and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). The conference also clearly put it:

“We demand for Black Africa autonomy and independence, so far and no further than it is possible in this one world for groups and peoples to rule themselves, subject to inevitable world unity and federation.”<sup>77</sup>

South African people have been represented in all these conferences and none of them ended without a word of condemnation of South Africa and Rhodesia. Nkrumah believed in the unity of Africa as the only possible means of constructing socialism and as a way of counteracting imperialism. Nkrumah’s Africa was different from what his friend and political advisor Padmore envisaged. Padmore’s standpoint was the realisation first of national states as separate political entities, “staked out by the present political realities”. These newly formed states should first consolidate themselves, gain self confidence; create stable political communities, to inculcate loyalty and respect for the nation and the laws of government, and to instil in the people a sense of shared purpose and of national identity.

Nkrumah’s dream was the creation of a supra state, and thus in sharp contradiction to factors inherent in the struggle for national independence which were to Padmore the first issues to be addressed. When national independence is gained, according to Padmore, the different national states could be formed into larger viable political entities. Padmore contended that without the creation of these entities by different independent African states, Pan Africanism as the ultimate goal would never be realised. What Padmore meant, was that plans for African unity could only be made possible in a postcolonial and independent Africa. Nkrumah believed in a totally unified Africa and he believed that Ghana would take a leading role in that direction. In his *Revolutionary Path* he writes:

“While the independent African states hang so tenaciously to their separate identities and interests the enemies of African people, the imperialists and the neo-colonialists and their local agents, strengthen the hands that unite them.”<sup>78</sup>

Nkrumah thought that if Africa would unite economically, culturally and politically, it would be in stronger position to avert

imperialism. He held the opinion that such plans should be the priorities of African people at a pre-independent stage and that such priorities be high in the agenda of all conferences of Pan Africanism. Although Nkrumah’s idea of a united Africa was a brilliant one, it was too hasty and untimely for it did not agree with the realities which were facing Africa at that time. Africa was still in a process of ridding itself of colonialism and many African states were still not yet independent.

Those African states which were independent already were faced with new problems of nation building from the heterogeneous tribes and chiefdoms. Padmore’s idea of federalism at local level, as an initial step was more realistic, in that it had a stabilising effect on individual governments before embarking upon such ambitious projects as the unification of the entire African continent. Both Nkrumah’s and Padmore’s visions of Africa fell on fertile ground in South Africa in the mind of Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe. As early as 1949, whilst he was still a student at Fort Hare, Sobukwe’s Pan Africanist views were apparent. In a speech delivered on behalf of the “graduating class” on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 1949, he said:

“I wish to make it clear again that we are anti-nobody. We are pro-Africa. We breathe, we dream, we live in Africa; because Africa and humanity are inseparable.”<sup>79</sup>

Sobukwe was not only fascinated by Nkrumah and Padmore but frequently quoted them during his speeches. In his inaugural speech of 6<sup>th</sup> April 1959, he said:

“Our relation to states in Africa may be stated precisely and briefly by quoting from George Padmore’s Pan Africanism or Communism. Discussing the future of Africa, Padmore observes that “there is a growing feeling among politically conscious Africans throughout the continent that their destiny is one, that what happens in one part of Africa to Africans must affect Africans living in other parts of Africa.”<sup>80</sup>

Writing about Nkrumah and Ghana, he emphasised:

“We honour Ghana as the first independent state in modern Africa which, under the courageous nationalist leadership of Dr Nkrumah and the Convention’s People’s Party (CPP), has actively

interested itself in the liberation of the whole continents from white domination and has held out the vision of a democratic United States of Africa. We regard it as the sacred duty of every African state to strive ceaselessly and energetically for the creation of a United States of Africa, stretching from Cape to Cairo, Morocco to Madagascar.”<sup>81</sup>

Whilst drawing from the philosophies of Padmore and Nkrumah he was not a blind follower. He was critical and did not fail to see the problems inherent in both philosophies. Writing about possible misinterpretation that could accrue Sobukwe warned:

“These states (African States)<sup>82</sup> will probably act as big brothers to the younger states. Of course we will have recalcitrants. I am certain that some of the leaders of the African states who are “great”, either because of the press had made them so, or because they are one-eyed dwarfs in a land of blind dwarfs will advance a number of excuses to put off the complete unification of the continent. They will do this for fear of losing their ‘greatness’.”<sup>83</sup>

About Padmore’s vision he foresaw a danger of African leaders paying lip service to African unity, while in reality they would be trying to advance their own personal goals of autonomous states with the object of remaining in the public eye. Sobukwe also noted with care that on Nkrumah’s structure of the United States of Africa there appeared to be no clear agreement then, among the African nationalists. At the Accra conference Nkrumah stressed the formation of such a communion of the African states which he thought would give expression to the African personality. The conference adopted Padmore’s outline of an initial federation of states, on a regional basis, finally merging into a “Federal United States of Africa.”<sup>84</sup>

Although the PAC had adopted the same outline, Sobukwe did not believe in federation because he feared that it entails compromise, sometimes on vital issues. Federation, he maintained, “tends to kill effective unity, because inherent in its idea of ‘trial for a period’” and he also foresaw the threat of ultimate secession by one state or another.<sup>85</sup> Sobukwe’s African dream was closer to Nkrumah’s United States of Africa, by referring to the PAC’s understanding of the concept, he wrote:

“So it is a unitary constitution that PAC envisages for a United States of Africa, with all powers vested in a central government freely elected by the whole continent on the basis of universal adult suffrage. In such a set-up, only continent-wide parties committed to a continental programme, and cutting across sectional ties and interests whether of tribal or religious nature are possible.”<sup>86</sup>

Sobukwe further believed that only a socialist African government would promote the idea of African unity and the concept of a free and independent African personality. His was an establishment of an Africanist Socialist Democracy which Padmore, Lembede and Nkrumah envisaged. These ideas of Sobukwe brought a split in the African liberation movement in South Africa, and a new political trend based on the Youth League’s African nationalism emerged, and within it an Africanist tendency was born.

The PAC explained later what they meant by African socialism:

“Nationalism demands that the interests of indigenous peoples should dominate those of aliens, because the country belongs to the indigenous peoples. Socialism demands that the interests of the workers should dominate over those of their employers, because their contribution to the creation of wealth is more significant than that of their bosses. Democracy, demands that those of the majority should dominate those of the minority, because they are a majority. In Africa in general and South Africa in particular, the African peoples are indigenous to the soil, are the real workers and are the majority. Their right to the effective control of their own interests is, therefore unchallengeable.”<sup>87</sup>

On 2nd November 1958, the Transvaal Africanists severed all relations with the African National Congress (ANC) as it was constituted. They declared:

“ We are launching openly ( the Transvaal Africanist camp ) as the custodians of the African National Congress Policy, as it was formulated in 1912 and pursued up to the time of the Congress Alliance.”

The above quoted statement was a response to the Freedom Charter of 1955, which was adopted by the ANC which declared:

“We the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people; that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality; that our country will never be prosperous or free until our people live in brotherhood enjoying equal rights and opportunities; that only a democratic state based on the will of all the people; can secure to all their birth right without distinction of colour, and white together- equals, countrymen, and brother adopt the Freedom charter.”

The PAC accused the ANC of having betrayed the material interests of African people - “ they have sacrificed these interests upon the altar of an ungodly alliance, an alliance of slave-owner, slave driver and slave “, they argued. The PAC further criticised the Freedom Charter of having obscured the colonial nature of the South African situation. The ANC accused the PAC and its African nationalism of being “a wave of black chauvinism provoked by the savagery of the Nationalist Party.” The PAC pointed out that the Charter does not speak of Independence or self-determination and does not mention African nationalism or white domination.<sup>88</sup>

## 9. CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is worth mentioning that these ideological differences between the ANC and the PAC are still dominating the political scene in South Africa today. The Black consciousness Movement rejected the Freedom Charter although some of its members subscribed to it as individuals. Black Consciousness became ideologically closer to the PAC and the two have much in common. The development of Black Consciousness should, however, be understood within a larger context, including not only Africa as whole but black America and the Caribbean as well (as illustrated in this article). The political and cultural evolution of South Africa has always been intricately bound up with the historic evolution of the entire black world.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Snail, M. L., *The antecedents and the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa – its ideology and organisation*. Munchen, Akademischer Verlag, 1993, 95.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Abengowe, W., *Pan Africanism Reconsidered*. Los Angeles, Davies and Berkley, 1962, 65

<sup>4</sup> Woods, D., *Biko*. New York and London, 1978, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Padmore, G., *Pan Africanism or Communism?*, 117.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Snail, M. L., *The antecedents and the emergence of the Black Consciousness...*, op. cit., 97.

<sup>8</sup> Padmore, G., *Pan Africanism...*, op. cit., 117.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Mathurin, O. C., *Henry Sylvester William and the Origins of Pan-African Movement, 1869-1911*. London, 1976, 163.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>14</sup> Rawson Walter Wooding established a private music school in South Africa for coloured children in 1902.

<sup>15</sup> Williams was admitted to the Bar in the Cape Colony on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 1903

<sup>16</sup> Mathurin, O. C., *Henry Sylvester William and the Origins...*, op. cit., 99.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 120

<sup>19</sup> Snail, M. L., *The antecedents and the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa – its ideology and organisation*. Munchen, Akademischer Verlag, 1993, 101.

<sup>20</sup> Mathurin, O. C., *Henry Sylvester William and the Origins...*, op. cit., 123.

<sup>21</sup> Dr. Leander Starr Jameson of Jameson raid fame, then the prime minister of the Cape Colony and representative of the Rhodes mining interest.

<sup>22</sup> Cit. by Mathurin, O. C., *Henry Sylvester William and the Origins...*, op. cit., 163, from *Simons HJ and Simons RE*, 196.9

<sup>23</sup> Padmore, G., *Pan Africanism...*, op. cit., 97.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>27</sup> Meli, F., "Before the Freedom Charter. The thesis of the National Revolution. Nationalism as a Contradictory Process", in Van Diepen, M. (ed.), *The National Question in South Africa*, London, 1988, 11.

<sup>28</sup> Snail, M. L., *The antecedents and the emergence of the Black Consciousness...*, op. cit., 104.

<sup>29</sup> Masilela N., "Africa in America and America and Africa "in the politics of Cultural Reciprocity, Part 1. - Original manuscript from the Author. (Also published in *Awa-finnaba*. March-October, No.8, Berlin, 1986), 20.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Vid. Blydens essays: 'Africa and the Africans of 1878 and Race and Study' (1895).

<sup>36</sup> Masilela N., "Africa in America...", op. cit., 23.

<sup>37</sup> Snail, M. L., *The antecedents and the emergence of the Black Consciousness...*, op. cit., 106.

<sup>38</sup> Masilela N., "Africa in America...", op. cit., 25.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Padmore, G., *Pan Africanism...*, op. cit., 102.

<sup>41</sup> Masilela N., "Africa in America...", op. cit., 28.

<sup>42</sup> Meli, F., "Before the Freedom Charter...", op. cit., 13.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>44</sup> Masilela N., "Africa in America...", 29.

<sup>45</sup> Meli, F., "Before the Freedom Charter...", op. cit., 13.

<sup>46</sup> Masilela N., "Africa in America...", 29-30.

<sup>47</sup> Some authors refer to use the NEUM as Unity Movement – It s the same movement.

<sup>48</sup> Trehwela, P., "George Padmore , a critique : Pan Africanism or Marxism? ". *Searchlight South - Africa, Vol.1 , No.1 September 1988*, 42.

<sup>49</sup> James, C. L. R., "Black Power", 227 as cited by Trehwela.

<sup>50</sup> Trehwela, P., "George Padmore...", op. cit., 43.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Legum, C., "The USSR and South Africa", in Bark, Dennis L. (ed.), *Red Orchestra, vol. II*. California, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, 1988, 107.

<sup>54</sup> Trehwela, P., "George Padmore...", op. cit., 65-66.

<sup>55</sup> Padmore, G., *Pan Africanism...*, op. cit., 360.

Legum, C., "The USSR and South Africa", in Bark, Dennis L. (ed.), *Red Orchestra, vol. II*. California, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, 1988, 107.

<sup>57</sup> Snail, M. L., *The antecedents and the emergence of the Black Consciousness...*, op. cit., 112.

<sup>58</sup> Masilela N., "Africa in America...", op. cit., 29.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* cited by Masilela from "Black Orpheus", No.1 September 1957, 44.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>61</sup> Stubbs, A., *Father Stubbs' Memoirs* ( Original manuscript in 1971 ), 71.

<sup>62</sup> Masilela N., "Africa in America...", op. cit., 29. as cited by Masilela from Clark, J. P.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

- <sup>64</sup> Bernstein H. and Biko, Steve, *International Defence and Aid Fund*, London, 1978, 12.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ikwezi*, No. 19, 1982, 24.
- <sup>66</sup> Snail, M. L., *The antecedents and the emergence of the Black Consciousness...*, op. cit., 117.
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid.
- Meli, F., “Before the Freedom Charter...”, op. cit., 173.
- <sup>69</sup> Mafika Gwala: he was one of the founder-members of the BCM and worked for the movement in its research and publication unit, alongside Biko and Serote. He emerged as one of the leading theoreticians and literary exponents of the BCM
- <sup>70</sup> Masilela N., “Africa in America...”, op. cit., 29.
- <sup>71</sup> Turner, R., *The eye of a needle*. Johannesburg, 1972, 77.
- <sup>72</sup> Padmore, G., *Pan Africanism...*, op. cit., 355
- <sup>73</sup> Ibid, 356.
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid, 355.
- <sup>75</sup> Diop A., *Pan Africanism Reconsidered*. Los Angeles, Davies LA and Berkley, 1972, 339.
- <sup>76</sup> Allen, W. A., *Pan Africanism Reconsidered*. Los Angeles, Davies LA and Berkley, 1962, 11.
- <sup>77</sup> Speech delivered by J. Nyerere in 1974 – (Original transcript)
- <sup>78</sup> Nkrumah, K., *Revolutionary Path*. London, 1978, 13.
- <sup>79</sup> Sobukwe, M., *Sobukwe’s speeches*. PAC – Office Dar-es-Salam, 1959, 11.
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid, 16.
- <sup>81</sup> Ibid., 16.
- <sup>82</sup> Authors note
- <sup>83</sup> Sobukwe, M., *Sobukwe’s...*, op. cit., 27-28.
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid, 28.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>87</sup> Sobukwe, M., *Congress and the Africanist : The Africanist Case*.
- <sup>88</sup> Snail, M. L., *The antecedents and the emergence of the Black Consciousness...*, op. cit., 127.