

FREE THE SASO 9. DEMONSTRATE

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Burning the black power candle

Part of the evidence against the SASO Nine, whose trial resumed in Pretoria's Palace of Justice on Monday is a verse which goes:

"To weep is a waste of glorious time.
Time to grab arms,
And aim them at
The blue-eyed enemy
Lurking in the bushes."

The evidence contains over 100 pages of poems, speeches, and resolutions calling for Coca Cola and IBM to withdraw from South Africa, which the State alleges promotes feelings of hostility between whites and other races. Under the Terrorism Act the minimum sentence is five years in prison. The maximum is death.

The SASO nine are seven African and two Indian members of the all-black (or in white South African language "non-white") South African Students' Organisation; or the BPC, the Black People's Convention. Their "black consciousness" credo, with American "black is beautiful" overtones, thrives among the more articulate students, intellectuals, and trade unionists.

So far the Government has baulked at outlawing SASO and its related political, trade union, youth, and cultural movements, possibly because of Mr Vorster's dedication to detente. Instead, their ranks have been decimated by banning, imprisonment, flights into exile, and a couple of unexplained murders.

The men in the dock in Pretoria include most of the remaining leaders of the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa. They were among 40

people arrested in September, 1974, for demonstrating at banned pro-Frelimo rallies. Though Mr Vorster subsequently recognised the Marxist Liberation movement when it became the legal government of neighbouring Mozambique, he drew the line at his own people shouting "Viva Frelimo."

After four months in solitary confinement under the Terrorism Act (a senior police officer may, without warrant, arrest any person whom he "has reason to believe is a terrorist")

Nine blacks went on trial this week, giving Mr Vorster's detente policy another jolt. Denis Herbstein reports

and detain him indefinitely), 12 men were charged. Led by Muntu Myeza, President of SASO at the time of his arrest, they came up into the court from the cells below defiantly singing "Ashikhatha... we don't care, even if we are arrested, even if we are killed..." They gave the Black Power clenched fist salute and turned their backs on the bench for several minutes to greet friends and relatives.

Eventually, after a false start and a separation of trials, nine men were charged with conspiracy to transform the State by revolutionary or violent means. By now the Frelimo rally charge had mushroomed into a widespread dossier containing much of the documentation produced by the Black Consciousness movement in the past six years.

A SASO resolution noted that "Christ was a revolutionary... who had joined the Essenes (an Israeli revolutionary movement), worked in close collaboration with the Zealots (an Israeli guerrilla warfare unit)

against the Romans." The students resolved to look at Christ as "the first freedom fighter" and instructed its black theology agency to correct the interpretation of Christ's mission that had been "atrociously perverted and distorted by white imperialists in their selfish and repressive aims."

A magazine article declared: "Hitler is not dead, he is likely to be found in Pretoria." A play portrayed the shooting of 69 blacks at Sharpeville as "deliberate mass murder by whites."

The Black Consciousness realism poem "Afrika" (not written by any of the accused):
"I am black, I am proud,
I am insulted every day,
My people are scorned every moment,
But the day will come
When I'll be free of the yoke of the
white man.

Black man; black nation.
Arise, arise from the slumber,
Prepare yourself for the war
We are about to start."

The sort of language is not only shocking to the Government, which wants to keep Africans, Indians, and Coloureds apart, but to white liberals also. They, in the words of a SASO essayist, "are in fact the greatest racists for they refuse to credit us with the intelligence to know what we want." But its anti-whiteism does find an echo among some of the Tribal Homeland leaders, and especially among the ranks of the Coloured people, now thoroughly disillusioned with Government policy towards them.

The State's main witness was Chris van der Merwe, a young political science lecturer at an Afrikaans university, who sifted through the documents identifying examples of psychological preparation for warfare," attempts to isolate South Africa on the diplomatic and economic fronts (like the sports boycott), or the mobilising of the masses round the central theme of Black Consciousness.

Strange things have happened in and around this trial. Early on, two unidentified white men were seen filming sections of the predominantly black crowd in the spectators' gallery, an activity as illegal in South Africa as it is in Britain. On another occasion at the end of the morning session police locked the doors of the court and took the names of spectators who had joined the men in the dock in singing a song called "The burden is heavy." That day the accused had arrived in court wearing black slacks, woollen caps, and T-shirts with the letters "BPC" on their chests.

At one stage the Judge refused to allow cross-examination of the security police on allegations of torture during interrogation, though this has always been permitted in similar trials in South Africa. And the court actually heard telephone conversations tape recorded by the Durban security police.

But there have been moments of "detente." On September 25, the prosecutor blew out the candle on a cake to mark the first anniversary of the men's detention. He refused to sing "for they are jolly good terrorists" for no joking will mask the seriousness of this important political trial.

Please read this report....then ACT!!

Unless you act, 9 South African students will be hanged by the racist Apartheid regime of South Africa.

DEFEND THE HUMAN RIGHTS of all political prisoners in Azania, Namibia, and Zimbabwe.

WHAT YOU CAN DO.

1. Demonstrate:- SAT. Feb. 21st. 1976
11 a.m. Harlem State Office
125th. St. & Adam Clayton Pwl. Blv.

2 pm; S.Africa Airways
610 FIFTH AVE. AND 49 ST.

2. Volunteer your time and skills
3. Attend our next meeting, and/or
4. Send funds urgently to:

The S.A.S.O. 9 Defence Fund
P.O.Box 467 Cathedral Sta.
New York, N.Y. 10025
(212) 678-3361 ext. 96

5. Inform others.

Sponsored by:
PanAfrican Students Organization (PASOA).
Endorsed by (partial listing):

Pan African Congress of Azania; African Youth Mvmnt;
National Student Coalition Against Racism.

For further info., please detach below & send:

I/we hereby endorse your SASO Defence Project.
 I/we wish to work on the SASO Defence Project.
 I/we enclose _____ as contribution.

Name _____ Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Organization _____

FREE THE S.A.S.O. NINE. SMASH APARTHEID.
APARTHEID OUT OF ANGOLA.