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LIBERATION

ONE SHILLING.

No. 37, JULY, 1959.

LET LUTULI SPEAK !

●
"FUSING" THE CONGRESSES?

●
Joe Matthews on "Africanism"

●
**Lionel Forman on
Self-Determination**



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Editorial:

TRIBUTE TO CHIEF LUTULI

"I believe that our vision of democracy in South Africa will be realised, because there is a growing number of people who are coming to accept the fact that in South Africa we are a multi-racial community . . . I am not prepared to concern myself with such questions as 'Where have you come from?' or 'Did you come from Europe?' It is not important. What is important for our situation is that we are all here. That we cannot change. We are all here, and no one desires to change it or should desire to change it. And since we are all here, we must seek a way whereby we can realise democracy, so that we can live in peace and harmony in this land of ours." — Chief A. J. Lutuli.

ONE is struck, not for the first time, by the difference in stature, between the big man who has been silenced and the little men who have silenced him.

Ever since, at the end of 1952, Chief Alebrt John Lutuli assumed the Presidency-General of Congress, the country has steadily been made aware of the emergence of a statesman of the highest calibre at the head of the African people. Previously, he had been leader of the Amakolwa community of the Lower Tugela, in which the Chieftainship is not hereditary but elective. He had been a member of the ill-fated Natives' Representative Council. He had been Natal President of Congress, and had won the highest reputation in A.N.C. circles. But the country as a whole knew little of the man who was to head Congress through one of the most crucial periods of its existence.

This was the period of the Congress of the People and the Freedom Charter, when the African-Indian Pact, signed by Xuma, Dadoo and Naicker and sealed in joint sacrifice during the Defiance Campaign, was to receive powerful new reinforcements from new organisations of Coloured and European freedom-fighters, and of anti-apartheid trade unions. It was the period when this new alliance, matching the dramatic march to freedom elsewhere in Africa, was to advance the only alternative to apartheid and, in view of the cowardly desertion by the United Party of its duty, the only genuine opposition to the Nationalists. And it was the period when the autocratic Government struck savagely back in reprisals, in repeated acts of banning, proscription from organisation, deportation and victimisation against Congressmen and trade unionists. The time of the Treason Trial.

TESTING TIME

It was the most severe testing time Congress has ever had to face, and — let there be no mistake — the newly-elected President was no baseline General; from his inauguration he was made to feel personally the edge of nationalist spite and persecution. He was, in flagrant denial of tradition and democratic procedure, deprived of his office — though free South Africa still affectionately refers to him as "the Chief", and always will. Hardly recovered from a serious illness, which endangered his life, he was subjected to the first of the banning orders from Swart, confining him to his home. He was, with the rest of the original 156 Treason Trialists, arrested at dawn, flown to Johannesburg, flung into the Fort, forced to undergo the long-drawn-out ordeal of the Drill Hall. And throughout these trials he was beset by a pack of yapping dogs at his heels, the Africanists and others, who found no insinuation too mean, no slander too scurrilous to hurl at him.

There may have been, at first, those who uneasily wondered whether, deterred or discouraged by these harsh experiences, the Chief might not retire from the hurly-burly of public affairs and — as others have done before him — devote himself to his own business. Or whether he might not become soured and embittered, or timidly over-cautious. Those who thought that way little understood what sort of man they had to deal with. Poor steel is broken in the furnace, but true steel is hardened and tempered. Each fresh trial has discovered in him new depths of character, integrity and steadfastness.

Yet it is not only of the fortitude of the Chief that we wish to speak here, for courage has become the hallmark of every Congressman. We wish, above all, to pay tribute to the qualities of leadership and statesmanship which he has given to a country which, more perhaps than any other, stands sorely in need of them. Albert Lutuli is a simple, straightforward man; a countryman, with none of the tricks and affectations of the vote-catching politician. When fascists attempted to break up a meeting of Whites in Pretoria which he was to address, made an onslaught on the platform, and violently assaulted him, he waited until the uproar had been quelled, brushed the dust from his clothes, and continued quietly with the address he had come to deliver. It was an appeal for better relations between Black and White.

Lutuli's manner of speech is always the same, whether his audience consists of fellow-Africans or not. He studiously avoids the inflated ranting, or the unnecessary use of long words to display one's vocabulary, which unfortunately characterise some of our orators. He speaks in a manly, direct manner, which leaves no doubt in any mind of his utter sincerity and integrity.

No one but a fool would mistake Lutuli's modesty and humility for meekness or submission. He does not need any trappings or titles to emphasise his dignity and bigness: it is there, within the man. Similarly, those editorialists in the English dailies who have written, recently, praising the Chief's "moderation", but regretting his association with "ultra-leftists" and "extremists", may be well-meaning, but they have mistaken their



CHIEF A. J. LUTULI

man. President Lutuli, it is true, is not the sort of narrow Nationalist of the Verwoerd type, seeking privileges only for his own community, and filled with hatred for all others. Yet his outward calm and studied reasonableness should not blind them to the passionate African patriotism that will never rest satisfied with less than complete equality of rights and opportunities for all who live in South Africa.

A SOUTH AFRICAN LEADER

For Chief Lutuli is a militant and uncompromising fighter for freedom; that is what has made him the chosen and worthy leader of the African people in this time of storm and tribulation. And yet he has become more than an African leader. Showing a flexibility of mind that might be envied by many half his age, he has grown in each year of his Presidency in loftiness of vision and understanding. He has come more and more to win acceptance by democratic and forwardlooking people among all sections of our population as a truly South African leader, speaking for and seeking the wellbeing of all in this gloriously diverse South Africa of ours: polyglot, varicoloured as flowers in a garden, drawn hither from many lands, a microcosm of mankind.

He is a big man, and that is why the little men have banned him. That is why they have banned Oliver Tambo, and Duma Nokwe, and many another good man and true; why yesterday they banned Walter Sisulu and Moses Kotane and Yusuf Dadoo and Bram Fischer . . . but the list could go on for pages. All condemned, without even knowing, much less answering, who had accused them, or of what, with a stroke of the pen by Ministers Charles Robberts Swart.

THE LITTLE MEN

The petty politicians who have banned the Chief, and so many of his companions and colleagues, the Verwoerds and the Swarts, have nothing of this quality. You never hear anything elevated or inspiring from them. They lack even Smuts's knack of playing the world-philosopher from time to time. Their only "philosopher" is Verwoerd, whose major contribution is the thesis that if the Government appoints an African official to implement its own policy in the Reserves it has thereby conferred "self-government" and "self development" upon the "Bantu".

In a couple of well-chosen words, recently, President Lutuli reduced the whole of this mountain of Verwoerdian talk to the rubbish it is:

"I do not know of any people who really have 'developed along their own lines' In practice it turns out not to be development along your own lines at all, but development along the lines designed by the Government through the Native Affairs Department."

That is true and it is unanswerable: Verwoerd proves it when he gags the Chief.

The Nationalist leaders are men who have shown themselves constitutionally and by training incapable of speaking, like Chief Lutuli and the

others whom they have banned, as South Africans, speaking for, loving, bringing out the best in all our peoples. They cannot comprehend the wealth that lies in our very diversity, nor the underlying humanity and South Africanism that binds us all. Their aim is to disunite us; their very battle-cry is "apartness"; they cannot conceive of a relation between our peoples other than that of hostile, forever warring, groups, fighting over the soil of this South Africa and the fulness thereof, like dogs over a bone. Their calling, their profession, their life, is the spreading of the spirit of Afrikaner exclusiveness, and hostility and contempt towards all others. And when they try to don the mantle of statesmen, of Ministers and leaders of the country, not merely of a cheapjack political party, they succeed only in making themselves ridiculous, like pigmies strutting in giants' robes.

THE TURNING POINT?

It may well be that the action of the Nationalists in banning Lutuli and other top Congress officials — at the very time they were voting to expel the Africans' handful of Representatives from Parliament — will prove the most ill-advised thing they have ever done. True, they have banned many a leader in the past, and there have been no revolutions. But history moves onward; times change. You may keep on adding flames beneath the cauldron of the people's anger and bitterness, but at last the cauldron will boil and overflow.

There has never been such widespread protest at the banning of any Congress leader before. Not only from the Congresses and the Liberals, but even the English daily press and some United Party M.P.'s. Not Graaff of course — how far is that man from being a Nat. himself? — but quite a few others. When B.A.D.-man de Wet Nel said in Parliament that Lutuli was "a hireling of the Indians" (What a coward! First silence a man, then use Parliament to fling the gutter-slanders of the Africanists against him!) there was at least one U.P. member with the courage to give him the lie.

These public protests have been, so far, but a surface ripple to indicate the deep and powerful currents of anger that the new bannings have aroused, and especially among the African people. It was, we believe, more than a coincidence that outbreaks of violence occurred over the Durban beer-hall within a week of the silencing of the country's most effective advocate of non-violence. It was, of course, unplanned, spontaneous: nevertheless a sign of profound tension and unrest.

Let Dr. Verwoerd not think that the people are going to forget Lutuli for the next five years while he vanishes into obscurity in the region of the Lower Tugela. Silent, invisible, his image will be standing by the side of every Government spokesman, when he tells the Africans they are enjoying self-government, when he tells the world we have freedom and democracy in South Africa, when they lie about farm labour.

South Africa needs Lutuli. He is not going to be this country's forgotten man. We are confident that, gathering volume with every week and month of his banishment, until even Nationalist Ministers deaf as posts will have to heart it, in every corner of the land the cry will ring forth: "LET LUTULI SPEAK!"

FUSING THE CONGRESSES?

The Congress Movement is a convenient expression for the alliance of liberationist, democratic and trade union organisations headed by the African National Congress, and accepting the Freedom Charter as a common programme of immediate objectives. Convenient as it may be, the expression is not really accurate, for the alliance comprehends five quite distinct movements, each with its own evolution, character and purpose. While they have formulated a common political programme in the Charter, and meet from time to time to seek agreement on means to further it, each continues vigourously and independently in furtherance of its own objects and functions.

Thus the alliance is not a single "movement"; it is not even a "federation" as Mr. Duncan once tried, unsuccessfully to maintain in "Contact", for a federation implies some surrender of sovereign independence by its constituents, whereas the alliance is an informal and voluntary working association of fully outonomous and independent partners. This independence, as anybody who is the least aware of the background and history of the alliance should be aware, is jealously guarded by the various organisations. The National Consultative Committee is not a policy-making body, but a forum for the exchange of suggestions for co-ordination, and its resolutions are not binding directives, but open recommendations which each body is free to reject or accept.

This distinction is no mere matter of semantics, and it becomes especially important in view of the proposals which have been advanced by some members of the Youth Branch of the Congress of Democrats, with the support of two Editors, Mr. Eprile of "Golden City Post" and Mr. Segal of "Africa South". Their suggestions vary in detail.

The general idea seems to be that the Congress allies should sink their separate identities and merge or amalgamate into one body.

A variation on this proposal is that the African National Congress should recruit non-Africans into its ranks, and two White candidates recently took the unusual step of offering themselves publicly for membership.

We do not agree with these proposals.

For one thing, they are unacceptable, and they will not work.

Take the major organisation involved, the African National Congress. The A.N.C. is not racialistic. It has proved that by forming the Alliance, by adopting the Freedom Charter, by overwhelmingly repudiating the

Africanists, who object to the anti-racialist basis of the Charter. But that does not mean that the A.N.C. membership will, or even should, welcome non-African sympathisers into the ranks of their organisation.

It is true that the A.N.C. has, on more than one occasion, elected Coloured members to leading positions. That, indeed, proves that the Congress is not racial but national. But let us not forget that these members live among the Africans, speak their languages, and share the hardships which are their common lot. It is rather a different matter when it comes to people from other communities who — however unwillingly — share in all the privileges and opportunities from which Africans are barred, and which Congress exists to destroy.

Ordinary African Congressmen find it hard to accept seriously when a well-meaning White man stands up and says "I am also an African." Yes, it is a nice phrase to use on the platform; in a sense, it is even true: we are all Africans if we are natives of this country. But do you really know what it is to be an African? To have a half-educated policeman call you "f----- Kaffer?" To see a notice "Whites Only" — and know that means "You keep out?" Perhaps you are really so sensitive and sympathetic that you are as keenly aware of all these things as those who suffer them, that you can put yourself in the place of the sufferer. Then why can't you also understand and appreciate how hard it is for the average Congress member to think of a European joining the A.N.C. in any other capacity than of a would-be supervisor, or at best, missionary for his own viewpoint?

After all, everything that can be done in this country is done to make the African feel and appear to be helpless and inferior. There is no aspect of his life where he can act for himself without White supervisors, superintendants, foreman and bosses. What could be more natural, then, that at least in the African National Congress members wish to make certain that this is truly their own organisation?

It is embarrassing to have to point out these things to our friends, and we should like to make it clear that we do consider them friends, although we disagree on this matter; we respect their motives. All the same, they have thrust this embarrassing discussion upon the movement.

We wonder, too, whether they have considered what the effect of their proposal would be, even if, what is highly unlikely, it were to be accepted. You would have a new organisation, a sort of political party, perhaps, somewhat in advance of the Liberal Party. But — whatever you called it, it would not be the African National Congress. We must not forget that A.N.C., like the S.A.I.C. and the S.A.C.P.O. is not only a political body. It has more than one aspect. In another aspect, it is a community organisation of the African people, a national body. The "fusionists' " suggestion would destroy this aspect of the A.N.C.

Again, the Indian community in this country has very serious and far-reaching problems of its own; problems which have repeatedly been the subject of discussion at the United Nations. It is natural and inevitable that the South Africans of Indian descent should band together in an organisation to face these problems and these threats to their very existence and future in this country.

It is true that all oppressed people in this country have tasks and problems in common, and so have White democrats and trade unionists of all races. To meet these common problems they have formed an alliance to fight together and co-ordinate their efforts in a common programme — the Freedom Charter.

But it is also true that the various communities have their own separate problems, and as long as national discrimination continues and persists, so long will each community find it necessary to organise to meet those problems.

In short, we consider the plans of the "fusionists" to be unpractical, schematic and incorrect.

WRONG IN PRINCIPLE

They are also wrong in principle. We believe that they are well-intentioned, but some of them in the heat of debate have used arguments which are rather offensive.

One of these is to refer to the A.N.C. and the other Congress movements as "racial organisations", "group areas" and so forth. Such talk cannot damage the Congresses, which have proved over many years their firmness and devotion in the struggle against racialism, but it does expose the limitations of those who indulge in it.

They appear to be unable to distinguish between a national liberation movement and various other types of organisation.

Where people organise as workers, or as students, or as socialists, or as musicians, or as sportsmen: there, we agree, there is a basis for multi-racial organisations; the more of them the merrier, and exclusiveness is objectionable and should be opposed.

But where you find oppressed people organising as a nationality, in the common struggle against the disabilities which they suffer as a community, and to preserve their very existence and identity, their national languages, cultures and traditions, you cannot deny their right and their duty to do so.

Our Congresses have defended vigorously their right to exist, in the face of fierce Government repression. We can but expect them to defend it also against well-intentioned but misguided advisers, the effect of whose proposals would be in the end that they lose their all-embracing and dynamic character as national liberation organisations.

“AFRICANISM” UNDER THE MICROSCOPE



by JOE MATTHEWS

THE Pan-Africanist Congress which met during the Easter weekend in Johannesburg is reported to have devoted much time to the discussion of policy. Unfortunately the Conference was held largely behind closed doors. The public was thus not able to judge the attitudes of the Africanists first hand.

Nevertheless it is known that the conference considered two statements of policy. These were the opening speech by Mr. R. M. Sobukwe, elected President of the Pan-Africanists, and also a Manifesto presented by Mr. P. Raboroko.

The manifesto is couched in terms so tortuous as to be almost incomprehensible. The opening speech by Mr. Sobukwe contains certain propositions which cannot be left unchallenged.

After a few introductory remarks Mr. Sobukwe paid tribute to the scientific achievements that were fast establishing man's control over nature but remarked on the unwillingness or inability of man to solve the social relations between man and man. It is this failure, according to Mr. Sobukwe, which has resulted in the existence in the world of the capitalist and socialist sectors of the world. This facile explanation of the origins of capitalism and socialism is designed to conceal rather than clarify the realities of the present world situation.

Every schoolboy knows that there was a time when the economic system of production known as capitalism held sway throughout the whole world. By 1913 the capitalist system, after replacing feudalism, had established itself as the dominant mode of production. In that year capitalism was in that phase of development in which the supremacy of monopolies and finance-capital had established itself; in which the export of capital had acquired a great importance; in which the division of the world among the big international trusts had begun; in which the partition of all territories of the earth amongst the great capitalist powers had been completed. That is the phase scientifically referred to as Imperialism. It is precisely imperialism which reduced the whole of Africa into a colonial hunting-ground of capitalist exploitation. It is then that the problem of African freedom from imperialism and colonialism arose. Africa was divided amongst six or seven imperialist powers and that still represents the basic

problem of the African continent today. No African patriot can forget this and divert the attention of his people away from this reality. There was no Soviet Union in 1913 and the whole of Africa was suffering under the iron heel of the imperialists.

In 1917 one-sixth of the earth broke away from the imperialist system and the first state controlled by the have-nots came into existence in the Soviet Union.

Today more than one-third of mankind are no longer under imperialism and are building their countries anew on the basis of a completely planned economy in which the profit motive has no part.

It does not help for Mr. Sobukwe to pretend that Africa is somehow exempt from the inevitable historical processes that are at work in the rest of the world. Mr. Sobukwe says that Africa is being wooed now by the two opposed systems or blocs. He says there is a new scramble for Africa. He employs other picturesque expressions. But he avoids saying categorically that Africa suffers today and has suffered for generations from the ravages of the Imperialist powers, Britain, United States, Belgium, Portugal, France etc. In Kenya, Algeria, and elsewhere foreign troops are attempting to halt the march to freedom of the African people. These same powers prevented Banda from accepting the invitation of the Africanists to open their conference. There is not one single private of the Red Army on African soil.

Borrowing terminology from the armoury of the capitalist press Mr. Sobukwe gives the impression that the Soviet Union is somehow trying to gain control of Africa. Knowing that there is not a tittle of evidence to substantiate this he confines himself to vague generalities.

Mr. Sobukwe is at least generous enough to acknowledge the superiority of the socialist economy over the capitalist. He has no choice. The most bitter enemies of socialism cannot deny this any longer. But he then goes on to deplore what he calls "totalitarianism" which he alleges exists in the socialist countries. In the name of the Africanists he makes a choice in favour of "political democracy as understood in the West". Mr. Sobukwe knows nothing of the socialist countries except what he hears from the capitalists. But at least he should have experienced "Western Democracy."

"WESTERN DEMOCRACY"

Can any African forget what Western democracy has meant to us? Has it not meant colonial slavery? Is Western Democracy to us not the suppression of liberty in Angola, Algeria, Nyasaland, Rhodesia and elsewhere? Has this western democracy not meant racial discrimination in the United States and South Africa? Mr. Sobukwe must not be surprised if he finds little enthusiasm amongst the African people for Western democracy. To us it means national oppression and exploitation.

For Mr. Sobukwe to say that Africa will borrow the best from the East and West is merely begging the question. He is inviting the Africans to ride astride two horses going in opposite directions. The whole world is marching to socialism and the only argument is on how to carry out the re-organisation of society on the basis of socialism.

The speech deals to some extent with National movements in Africa. It is a pity that Mr. Sobukwe does not describe what a national movement is and how it differs from a political party. If he had done this he would have been compelled to acknowledge that a national Movement unites all the people of an oppressed national group which has lost or is in danger of losing its independence. The National movement brings together the oppressed nationality as a whole no matter to what class they belong as long as they are prepared to fight for national freedom. In the interest of the struggle for national freedom the people sink their political, religious and other differences in the interests of the struggle. It is fatal for such a movement to start witch-hunts of "communists" or "Charterists". Those who engage in these witch-hunts can only be regarded as disrupters of the national movement in the interests of the ruling class which they assist objectively. As long as the African people have not achieved national freedom they will reject attempts to divide them on the basis of ideology. That is why splinter groups have been decisively rejected by the people for the past forty years. The African National Congress which is their mouthpiece remains their primary organisation for that reason.

Mr. Sobukwe deals in his speech with the question of the Indian people. His ideas of the political trends among the Indian people belongs to a past era — thirty five years ago. According to him the merchant class among the Indian people provide the leadership of the Indians. He claims that the merchant class identifies itself with the oppressors in South Africa. I am certain that the Indian merchant class which is faced with ruin under the Group Areas Act would be pleased if the ruling class in South Africa showed some appreciation of the identification which it is alleged to exhibit towards the oppressors. That, however, is by the way. What must be contested is Mr. Sobukwe's claim that the merchant class constitutes the leadership of the Indian people. Has Mr. Sobukwe never heard of the struggle whereby the representatives of the merchant class were thrown out of the leadership of the Indian Congress in 1945? Does he not know the history of the Dadoo-Naicker leadership which took over the Indian Congress in the name of the masses? It is well-known that the merchants then formed their own organisation — the South African Indian Organisation. They broke away from the South African Indian Congress on the grounds that it was under the control of "leftists" and "communists". They complained of the Indian Congress policy of co-operation with other groups including the Africans. The Indian merchants demanded the formation of an all-Indian organisation where the Indian people will be by themselves without interference. Has Mr. Sobukwe heard these aims before? Is not the language of the Indian merchants very similar to his own?

No Mr. Sobukwe the correct thing to do is to study Indian history and learn a little of the struggle of the Indian national group against oppression in South Africa. The majority of the Indian people follow the lead of the Indian Congress which wholeheartedly supports the policy of the African National Congress.

In dealing with the ultimate goals of the Africanists Mr. Sobukwe remarked that the Africanists "do not all subscribe to the fashionable doc-

rine of South African Exceptionalism." This would be admirable if it were true. He, in common with other Africanists for instance, seem to deny that the Africans in South Africa suffer class oppression. They affirm that the Africans only suffer national oppression. There is no class struggle in South Africa, say the Africanists. This is the worst example of South African exceptionalism. The fact is that the African people suffer double oppression — national and class oppression. National or caste oppression means that all Africans whatever their class position suffer certain disabilities as such. But of course there are other disabilities that they suffer in common with workers of all races as part of the working class. In Ghana they have freed themselves from national oppression. But the class oppression still remains. In a certain historical situation the class struggle may be blurred by the national struggle but to forget it is treason to the masses of the people. Perhaps that is why the long opening speech by Mr. Sobukwe contains not one word of interest to the long suffering masses of our people — the farm labourers, peasants and urban workers.

NEW DEFINITION

Finally Mr. Sobukwe proposed a new definition of an African and affirmed the refusal of the Africanists to guarantee the rights of minorities. He was prepared to accept as an African everybody who owes loyalty to Africa and who accepted the democratic rule of an African majority. There is much in that definition which would be of great interest to students of logic. As far as we are concerned Africans will remain Africans no matter what definitions are adopted. The real point of importance is the fact that the Africanist policy is to refuse guarantee of rights to minority groups. According to Mr. Sobukwe only individual rights are recognised in the Africanist conception of democracy. Very generous indeed to at least recognise the rights of individuals!

But the whole point is that in countries where the population is not homogeneous, where there are a number of national groups, it becomes necessary to go further than merely to recognise the right of each individual citizen of the state. It becomes essential to create conditions under which those who do not belong to the numerically superior national groups are able to develop their languages, culture and customs without let or hindrance.

The Pan-Africanist Congress adopted as its policy the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. They ought to remember that this Declaration was adopted after a world war caused by groups which refused to respect minority rights. The Nazis practised oppression of the Jewish minority by the majority. It is the "democratic German majority" which oppressed the Jews. True enough each individual Jew had equal rights theoretically in the state in common with other individuals. But no rights as a minority group.

The guarantee of full rights to minority groups is fundamental in any truly democratic society.

And it must be emphasised that this has nothing to do with the preser-

vation of the privileged position of dominant minority groups exercised at the expense of the majority. In various parts of Africa, notably in Kenya, white minorities are demanding guarantees of their present privileged position even after the achievement of power by the Africans. Quite obviously this cannot be mistaken for the guarantee of the democratic rights of minorities. But the aims of the African people can clearly not be to replace the present set-up with one in which minorities are suppressed.

The African National Congress throughout the whole of its history has always been most careful about the safeguarding of the rights of minorities. Despite the sufferings inflicted upon the African people by non-African minorities, our national organisation has never allowed bitterness and desperation to dictate its policies on this question. The Africanists must take a look at what is happening to the English in South Africa and the manner in which their rights are fast disappearing. It is almost becoming a crime to speak English. Yet the English have equal rights with the Afrikaners as individuals! The Africans do not want to repeat the mistakes of Afrikaner Nationalism.

The question still remains as to the plan of the Africanists for the people NOW. The African people are under attack now more than ever. The issues that face them must be taken up with courage no matter what the odds are against which they are pitted. The people want a clear lead. They want "positive action" to use the popular expression of genuine African Nationalists throughout Africa.

On these matters Mr. Sobukwe gives us not a clue. Or is it perhaps that the risks of challenging the Nationalist government are too great? Every second African is a master of oratory and rhetoric. We do not need these any more. Even more important than what we will do when we are free is the immediate question of what we are prepared to do now. On that basis the people will judge any political group which desires to lead them. Visions, no matter how vividly portrayed, can never take the place of present-day realities.

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SELF-DETERMINATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

A Contribution to Discussion

by LIONEL FORMAN

IN modern times the right of nations to self-determination has become a rallying call of oppressed peoples all over the world.

What does this demand mean? Essentially it means that a nation has the right to determine its own destiny, and this in turn means that, if it forms part of a multi-racial state or empire, it has the right to secede and lead an independent political existence.

That is self-determination. But what is a nation? People use this word in many ways. Everyone has for example heard talk of a South African nation, a Zulu nation, and an African nation. In each case something different must be meant, for the Zulus form part of the African people and the Africans part of the South African people. They cannot all be nations unless one gives the word nation a very amorphous meaning like community, or people. Social scientists have therefore analysed the specific characteristics which make a community tightly knit and integrated, and capable of leading a separate existence. The definition they have adopted is that a nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up, manifested in a community of culture.

A community possessing all four of these essential features, and lacking none of them, is capable of leading an independent political existence in the world of today; and such a community is therefore entitled, as of right, to receive from all true democrats in the other nations of the multi-national state or empire of which it forms part, the fullest support for its demand for self-determination.

South Africa is not a single nation but a multi-national state. What is the position with regard to the Africans, who constitute the majority of the population of this State?

They too are not a nation. To a very large extent they have become, as the result of their common oppression, and the unifying efforts of the ANC, a single political community — but, like South Africa itself, it is a multi-national political community containing several languages and cultures.

AN AFRICAN NATION?

Are the Africans developing into a single nation? The answer seems to be 'Yes', and a single African nation is likely to develop before a single South African nation does.

The beginnings of a single South African national consciousness can be traced back to the 1880's.

Until the 19th century the economic basis did not exist for the amalgamation of the numerous African tribes into states. They were cattle-grazers and small scale farmers, and as they required large areas of pasture and lived at subsistence level the tendency was towards dispersal rather than concentration of population. Even when, with the accumulation of wealth, a ruling class and a state developed, it was capable of exercising its authority only over a limited area, and when conflicts of interest arose it was powerless to prevent dissident groups within the tribe from moving off to pastures new.

As new techniques were acquired, making possible a greater division of labour and the development of a standing army, groups of African tribes would have developed towards a statehood and unification just as people did in Europe, and this is clearly demonstrated early in the 19th century by the Zulus from the time of Tshaka and the Basuto from that of Mosheshoe.

Unification in this form however was smashed in its infancy by British imperialism.

Nevertheless, it is not impossible that British imperialism hastened the development of a single African nation rather than retarded it. The huge inflow of capital which came with the discovery of diamonds in 1870 and of gold sixteen years later transformed South Africa from a collection of primitive pastoral and agricultural communities into a single economic unit, and smashed the tribal system and sped up the process of unification of the Africans.

Long before the industrial revolution wrought by the discovery of diamonds and the imperialist intervention in South Africa the voluntary amalgamation of all the black people to make a stand against the white advance had been a dream of the most farsighted African leaders and the nightmare of all the Europeans. But it had remained a dream.

Far from there being unity of the African tribes, a handful of Europeans were able to exploit inter-tribal conflicts so skilfully that in every decisive campaign by far the main burden of fighting, on the European side, was borne by Africans.

At the same time a tiny African petit-bourgeoisie composed of mission assistants, priests, teachers and clerks was coming into existence in the

Eastern Cape, and in the early 1880's the first bodies cutting across tribal barriers, the first African bodies came into being. Most important of these were Mutual Benefit societies at Kimberley, (embryo trade unions), the African Educational Association (composed of teachers and priests around the mission stations of the Eastern Cape), and the general political organisation, Imbumba Yama Afrika.

The last-named may be described as the first Non-European national organisation — the direct forerunner of the African National Congress. Like the Afrikaner Bond it came into being as the result of the heightened national oppression which followed the decision of the British, in 1874, to establish complete control over Southern Africa.

From the formation of Imbumba onwards, the drive towards the unity of all Africans continued steadily. By the time of Union there were political organisations uniting men not as members of tribes but as Africans (though the word 'African' was not yet used) in each of the provinces, and with union their merger into the South African Native National Congress was a natural development.

With Congress came the conscious assertion of a single African nationhood. In fact, however, the Africans do not yet constitute a single nation in the sense in which we are using the word.

Does this mean that the ANC is incorrect to demand self-determination? Of course not, for (quite apart from the fact that there may be circumstances in which even a single "pre-nation" should be supported in the demand for self-determination) the Africans are a political community made up of several national groups on the verge of nationhood, and as we shall see their right to self-determination cannot be disputed.

ZULUS, AFRIKANERS, COLOURED

This brings us a stage further. What is the position with regard to the different national communities which make up the African people? Let us consider the Zulus.

With their common language, territory and culture, the Zulus have the main requisites of nationhood.

We have only to settle the question of whether there can be said to be a common Zulu economy, or, in the words of Potehkin in his recent Liberation article, "a single national market." The main prerequisites for the development of such a market are "the geographical division of labour and the existence of developed exchanges on a profit basis within a capitalist mode of production."

If we take this view, the only thing separating the Zulus from true nationhood is the stifling of their economy by the colour bar. Abolish the colour bar and the Zulus will become a nation almost overnight. They are a form of the community known in Russia as a "Narodnost", the closest

English translation of which is "nationality," and as that has a different connotation in English, I would suggest that we use the word "pre-nation."

What has been said of the Zulus applies, subject to modification, also to the other African peoples in South Africa.

What of the Afrikaners? No South Africans can vie with Verwoerd's Nationalists in the fervour with which they express the conviction, not only that the Afrikaners are a nation, but that they are the nation.

Here again we are at odds about a definition. The pure lily-white Afrikaner volk about which the Verwoerd Nationalists declaim are not a nation but an hallucination. If there is an Afrikaner nation in South Africa it does not consist of the 1½ million Afrikaners who can claim white identity cards, but of about 2½ million people — for once you break through the racialist smokescreen it becomes clear that the one million Afrikaans-speaking Coloureds are a part of the same national community as the 1½ million Afrikaans-speaking whites, common territory, language, economy, culture and all. Except for the political and social discrimination there is nothing at all to distinguish the very substantial proportion of Afrikanerdom which, though technically Coloured, passes for white, from that proportion which is too dark, or too proud, to pass.

And what is so ironical is that the Coloureds are one of Afrikanerdom's greatest national assets. With them Afrikanerdom has a territory where it is in the majority, with a few good-sized towns; and it has a much better balanced class structure.

Although the present leaders of white Afrikanerdom would choke at the idea, it is very possible that under conditions of freedom the single white and Coloured Afrikaner nation will be one of the first to consolidate itself, and that its Afrikaner language and culture will blossom as never before.

At the same time it must be noted that the position is by no means static. The political discrimination against the Coloureds is creating something akin to a Coloured national consciousness, separated from that of the white Afrikaner, and comparable with that of the Negro in the U.S. The South African Coloured People's Organisation is thought of as a national organisation like those of its African and Indian allies in the Congress alliance. But an optimistic estimate of the time required for winning freedom would preclude the development of a separate Coloured nation born of "race" oppression.

There appear, therefore, to be several communities in South Africa which will swiftly become nations when the national oppression which strangles their economic development is ended.

SELF-DETERMINATION AND SECESSION

This brings us to a discussion of the form which the demand for self-determination is likely to take.

When other oppressed nations, particularly those of Africa, have put forward the demand for self-determination, the form of self-determination contemplated has almost always been that of secession (although informal political links with the former oppressor nation may be maintained, as is the case with the independent nations of the Commonwealth.)

In South Africa, however, as far as the Africans are concerned, self-determination has a different significance. For them it is not a question of calling upon an oppressing majority to permit them independence in their own territory; nor one of calling upon a foreign power to withdraw.

For the Africans are the majority. In a democratic South Africa they can have no fear of being subjected to discriminatory laws by another South African nation, and therefore the demand for Africans to secede from anywhere would not make sense.

The form that the demand of the Africans for self-determination takes, therefore, is simply that for full equality. And as the African pre-nations draw their whole strength and hope from their inter-national African unity, the demands of the individual pre-nations, are identical with and inseparable from those of the Africans as a whole.

The mere winning of the full and free franchise would guarantee the Africans self-determination, constituting, as they would, the majority of the electorate; there would, in effect, come into being an independent African state, with (if the Freedom Charter is the basis) full protection for national minorities.

This leads us to a question which is going to be raised more and more frequently as the realisation grows, that the Freedom Charter is neither treason nor a dream. What does the Charter mean when it says "All national groups shall have equal rights." And what is meant by the term 'national group'?

One answer we may give is that these are things which must be thrashed out at a national convention to plan the new state form, and that if people want to know the answers they must urge the holding of such a convention.

But such a reply, good as it is, is not altogether satisfactory. The new state may not come about as the result of around-table conference! We should begin to think about answers now; not fixed and inflexible answers — for conditions change — but answers nevertheless.

A FEDERATION

Does the answer lie in some form of multi-national federation comparable say with that of the Soviet Union, India, Switzerland or China?

I would suggest it does. The Freedom Charter guarantees the right of all national groups to develop their own languages and cultures. For the

first time the national cultures will be able to blossom, stimulated by (among other things) free, equal and compulsory education, of the highest standard, available in the national languages.

The example of other countries has proved that only by the fullest development of the national cultures will it be possible to secure the maximum participation of the backward nationalities in the work of constructing a new South Africa.

It may seem strange that the best way to achieve the fusion of national cultures in the future into one common culture, is to favour the blossoming of many cultures first.

As Pandit Chandra put it: "Disunion for the sake of union. Just think! — It even smacks of the paradoxical. And yet this 'self-contradictory' formula reflects the living truth of dialectical reasoning."

The national cultures must be permitted to develop and expand and to reveal all their potential qualities in order to create the conditions for their fusion.

National cultures do not blossom in the air. They have to be rooted in the firm soil. And national cultures, plus territory, plus the unshackled economy which freedom will bring, means nations. The perspective is opened of a South Africa which is an economically integrated brotherhood of equal and autonomous nations, united in a single state, in which racial discrimination will be a crime.

This development and expansion is not merely a matter of the happy future "when freedom comes".

It is obvious that to really get to the hearts and minds of the people, particularly the backward rural masses it is necessary to develop to the full a presentation of our message which has its roots deep in the popular culture — and to do this immediately.

It is necessary to produce democratic literature in the language of the people — not merely in translation but in the original idiom. Because English is the most widely understood language it is natural that it should be so widely used for conferences and country-wide newspapers. But this is no excuse for neglecting the majority of the population who have not been fortunate enough to obtain sufficient education to read or to follow an argument in English. In this respect we could learn from Indian democrats who also use English as the international tongue, but at the same time produce extensive literature in the vernacular languages.

If there is any neglect of these people it is still a hang-over from the old days when there was a feeling that the intellectuals were the only important people in Congress, and when, in turning their backs on tribalism, the intellectuals tended to turn their backs also on their language and culture.

The need to remedy this situation is already widely recognised. The effect of the deeply moving and inspiring African political songs and music which has been created in recent years is evidence enough of the importance of this type of development. Now what are required are plays and poems and dances of liberation which will inspire and teach people who know no English, and which will give them that added consciousness of dignity which pride in a national culture instils.

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