



LIBERATION

ONE SHILLING

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LITERATURE AMONG
AFRICANS

•
CHINA SOLVES NATIONAL
PROBLEM



A JOURNAL OF DEMOCRATIC DISCUSSION

LIBERATION

invites contributions in the form of articles on political, scientific, literary and other matters of general interest; short stories, poems; or factual material upon which articles can be based.

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Editorial

OUT OF THE DITCH

THE meeting at Geneva between the heads of the Soviet Union and the major capitalist States has been greeted with overwhelming relief all over the world. It is true that no concrete agreement was reached at this meeting, or at that between the U.S.A. and the People's Republic of China which followed it. But that such talks should have been held at all—and they are to be followed by further discussions between the Foreign Ministers in October—is a tremendous victory for the friends of peace throughout the world, who have long been demanding that differences between the nations should be resolved by negotiation instead of the ruinous armaments race, military groupings and threats of unbridled atomic war to which we have become accustomed of late years.

It would be foolish to imagine that the desperate and powerful men in America who plotted and started the Korean war have willingly abandoned their dreams of world conquest. But those dreams have, one by one, proved empty illusions and the ravings of lunacy. They began to crumble when the Yankee "supermen" turned and fled from the Yalu River: they have shattered to nothingness with each new

evidence of Soviet advancement and superiority in the field of science and technology. The blast of the first Soviet hydrogen bomb—technically ahead of America's—was the final explosion which dispelled the illusions of the would-be world conquerors, and awoke them to the realities of a world in which Socialist Russia and People's China have come to stay, and in which peaceful co-existence is the only possible alternative to annihilation.

This awakening to reality was the new factor that made possible the talks at Geneva and that reflected itself in them. It is not the Soviet Union that has changed its policy. A lot of silly chatter has appeared in the newspapers about a new Soviet policy that has arisen since the death of Stalin. No doubt, the policy of the Russian leaders, like that of any other country, must modify itself according to changed circumstances. But, on the fundamental need for the peaceful co-existence of the socialist and capitalist systems, Soviet policy has remained clear and stable since 1917. No man contributed more to the establishment and clarification of that policy than Stalin himself; his last public statement was a powerfully-worded demand for just such a meeting as has now taken place at Geneva.

A NEW PHASE

History is a process, and only a simpleton could expect to see the evil effects of a decade of war hysteria, vicious anti-Soviet lying, and fairy-stories about the "Communist menace," undone overnight. In West Germany, the new **Wehrmacht** is still arming. On the island of Taiwan, the U.S.A. still holds Chiang Kai-shek pointed like a revolver at the heart of China. And imperialist machine-guns still chatter in the forests of Kenya and Malaya, and in the villages of French North Africa. Nevertheless, the tide has turned against war and in favour of the people. Geneva has ended the Big Lie that the Soviet Union wants war, that enormous military preparations are necessary to defend us, that the so-called "free world" must be "mobilised against Communism."

A new phase has opened in world events. The long perilous winter of the "cold war" is drawing to its end, and mankind may at last be entering into a happy springtime of peace and friendship among the nations. We are emerging from the dreadful nightmare of a world engulfed in the flames and destruction of nuclear warfare which has haunted us ever since the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Churchill's infamous Fulton speech ten years ago.

What does this new phase mean to the ordinary people of the world in their bitter struggle for food, land, homes, education, jobs and freedom? What does it mean to the people of South Africa, suffering under the sjambok of apartheid?

We have had occasion before in these columns to point to the inseparable connection between the struggle for world peace and the people's aspirations for freedom and democracy. War and war prepa-

rations are the enemy of the people's living standards and liberties. The arms that were made and the men who were conscripted in Britain, under the pretext of preparing for an allegedly imminent attack from the "Reds," have in fact been used in drawn-out and bloody attempts to crush the people of Malaya and Kenya. In America and other countries, including our own, delirious ravings by Government spokesmen and police officers about fabulous "Communist plots" have been the pretext for an all-out onslaught against the labour and democratic movement, and the institution of a police regime in which the spy, the telephone-tapper, the black-lister and the informer reign supreme.

This hateful machinery is not going to disappear like frost on the highveld in a few hours sunshine. In fact, without the most determined and protracted struggle by the forces of democracy, mobilising all their forces in united endeavour, it is not going to disappear at all. But the new phase in international relationships creates a new climate favourable to that struggle. It opens up a fresh way forward for the advancement of the common people of the world in their eternal march to wider freedoms and higher standards of life and culture.

Already, even in the United States, reaction has begun its first steps of retreat. The noble-hearted Negro artist, Paul Robeson, long denied his right to travel and sing abroad, by the fascist McCarthyism that held America in its grip, has at last been granted a passport, though only for Canada. The unspeakable McCarthy himself languishes in obscurity and disgrace. American democrats still sit in jails for the crime of expressing opinions unpopular with big business, and no change in policy can restore the martyred Rosenberg couple to life, but the tide is changing. The American people will surely return to the broad road of progress their forefathers began in 1776, and recoil with shame and loathing from the foetid swamp of Hitlerism in which they have wallowed these past ten years.

Another potent sign of new times was the conference that preceded Geneva, the meeting of African and Asian countries held at Bandoeng in Indonesia. Headed by Nehru and Chou En-Lai, the delegates at Bandoeng represented widely different political and economic outlooks. That they overcame these differences in their common opposition to war and colonialism, and left the meeting better friends than when they came, is a factor whose significance for the future it would be difficult to overestimate.

No word of welcome for the favourable trend towards world peace signified by the Geneva and Bandoeng meetings has been heard from Mr. Strijdom or any of his lieutenants. Not Mr. Strijdom, but Mr. Kotane and Maulvi Cachalia spoke for South Africa at Bandoeng. Preoccupied with their wretched problem of "keeping the native in his place," the Nationalists seem hardly to have noticed that the world is not as it was yesterday. Olive Schreiner once wrote that "you cannot keep a man down in a ditch without staying down there with him," and our rulers seem far more concerned with keeping non-white people out of their buses and polling booths than with the fact that humanity

has, for a while at any rate, been reprieved from its death sentence by frying or poisonous radiation.

For all that, South Africa cannot remain untouched by the currents of democracy and freedom now flowing so strongly about our globe. Try as it will, the Government cannot hope to erect a corrugated-iron curtain between our country and the rest of the world, nor can they for long hope to prevent the non-white people of South Africa from joining their brothers and sisters of all countries in the trek to progress.

Despite every obstacle of terror and intimidation, the pall of Bantu Education, the mass evictions from Johannesburg's Western Areas, the bannings and deportations of their leaders and the packing of Court and Senate, the people of South Africa have never been so united and determined to win their freedom.

And despite the rising frenzy of Strijdom, Swart, Verwoerd, Rademeyer and Co., their prospects of victory have never been brighter.

A PROGRAMME FOR THE PEOPLE

The daily newspapers attached small significance to the meeting at Kliptown which, on June 26, 1955, completed its two days of discussion and adopted the Freedom Charter. But we believe that the text books of the future will treat it as one of the most important landmarks in our history.

The Congress of the People was not only important because, in present South African conditions, it represented a triumph of determination, enthusiasm and good organisation against every means, short of an outright ban, which the State could bring to bear on it. Nor because it was the most representative gathering of men and women of all races, from all corners of the country, that has ever taken place. The Congress was above all important because of the heritage it has given the people of South Africa—the Freedom Charter, compounded of innumerable demands, written and verbal, sent in from town and country, farm and factory and prison, from schools and churches, from homes and street corners.

The Charter has, for the first time, given the democratic movement a clearly-defined common purpose and direction. Often enough have we spoken and written of "freedom"—though, perhaps, each of us may have had a different concept of what we mean. Now there is no room any more for such differences. For the Charter provides us with a precisely phrased, clear-cut conception of what the **people**—not just this or that individual—mean by Freedom. The Freedom Charter is more than a list of demands. It is the voice of South Africa claiming its own. It is the plan for the builders of new South Africa. It is the People's Programme of Action.

To the Nationalists and their open and concealed supporters, the Freedom Charter is the trumpet of doom. To the Liberals, the "Federals," the Covenanters, the Friedmannites and all who seek to walk the

shaky tightrope between the contending armies of freedom and oppression, it is an inescapable challenge. You, ladies and gentlemen, claim to be for liberty. Here it is! Are you for it or against it? Will you fight for the Freedom Charter?

For the millions of oppressed Non-Europeans and the thousands of European democrats who reject the false god of "baasskap," the Freedom Charter is a banner, an inspiration, a marching-song that voices their deepest longings, their inmost aspirations.

"South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white." Thus opens the Freedom Charter. A challenging idea, this!

We know of the familiar theory of the Afrikaner nationalists: that this country is the God-given property of the descendants of Van Riebeeck's party of settlers and of the Voortrekkers who conquered it, who still think and behave like an army of occupation. Familiar, too, is the far-from-dead conception that the Union "belongs" (also by right of conquest) to Britain—as personified by the lady whose head adorns our coinage. And, though less is heard of it, we have no doubt that a number of important gentlemen holding large blocks of shares in gold and uranium mines, owning thousands of morgen of wheatlands and mielielands and vineyards and orchards and cattle ranches and sheep farms, disposing of millions of pounds worth of city properties, directing vast banking and financial institutions—we have no doubt that such gentlemen are of the opinion, backed up by title-deeds and legal rights, that South Africa belongs to **them**.

A daring new doctrine it is then, that says that our beautiful country, from the Limpopo down to Cape Point, the lush meadowlands of Zululand and Natal; the wide sunny expanses of the highveld and the Free State and the Karroo; the goldfields and the diamond fields, the great cities erected by the hands of the workers who live in them—that all of this our South Africa belongs, by right, not to the self-appointed master-race, nor to the Queen, nor to the money-bags: but to all of us who live here, who have watered the soil with our sweat; "we, the people of South Africa."

And so the Charter goes on, point by point, to fill in the picture, to claim for the people their rights to land and peace and liberty, to vote and to govern, to work and to learn, to live free from raids and arbitrary arrests and insults to their colour and language, in dignity and decency and security.

A noble Charter, this! A worthy cause to strive for, unto the end.

DOWN TO WORK!

Can the Charter be won? Can it be changed from words on paper to living reality?

The answer depends on the people of our country and in the first place on their democratic labour and liberation organisations.

To the men and women of the African National Congress and its allies in the Congress movement, whose devoted work made the great Congress of the People possible, we say, "Now is the time to work as never before." Bring home the meaning of the Charter to every man, woman and child. Take up every problem that faces the people wherever they are, however small, and relate it to the Charter. Here, in this Charter, you have the means to increase manifold the membership and influence of Congress.

Let the Congress movement clear the decks for action! The tasks of winning the Charter place challenging responsibilities of leadership before us. There will be no room in the future for the sort of blunders—remoteness from the rank-and-file, vacillation from adventurism to despair, lack of flexibility—that have characterised some recent campaigns. Let us get down to sound organisation, education, efficiency and aliveness to local issues at branch level! Let us prune our organisations of the windbags and would-be dictators!

What about the millions of peasants and farm labourers in the countryside? The Congress of the People revealed weaknesses on this vital sector! It will be for us to overcome these weaknesses, to organise the rural folk in peasant organisations, if we want to win the Charter!

What about the trade union movement? The S.A. Congress of Trade Unions has struck a blow for true trade union principle, but yet it lags organisationally behind the rising militancy of the workers. And without the workers marching at the head, the Charter cannot be won!

And let us not forget that more and more Europeans are impatiently seeking forms of expression of their hostility to the Government, outside the frustrating inaction and futility of the official Parliamentary opposition Parties. Here is a chance for the Congress of Democrats to come forward and win them for the Charter, boldly and in its own right. But it is a formidable task, demanding unconditional energy and efficiency: a ruthless break with sectarianism.

Here is a formidable task for all of us. We shall meet with opposition not only from the ruthless fascists above, but also from the faint-hearts, the unstable romantics who imagine that victory can come in a day, and despair the day after; the careerists and opportunists in our own midst.

But we have two mighty forces on our side: the people, and history. We have a noble cause, and splendid comrades by our side. We shall win.

Let us get down to work!

HOW CHINA SOLVES THE NATIONAL QUESTION

By DAN TLOOME

CAN a people of various nationalities, with diverse customs, culture, habits, languages and religious beliefs, live together in harmony and on the basis of national equality?

This is a question generally posed in all countries that are confronted with the problem of finding a practical and realistic policy that will allow the co-existence of various nationalities living together within the same State.

While various countries, at different times, have formulated and worked out policies for the solution of their national questions, each solution has been based and guided by various historical facts. For instance: what interests are being served by the class that is attempting to solve their national question? And at what period in its development? Because of this, different countries have various concepts, coupled with their varying historical traditions and background, of what constitutes a nation, and their patterns of policy and approach are dissimilar.

In colonial and semi-colonial countries the dominant nations follow a particular, definite pattern of policy towards the subject nations, a pattern conforming to their system of government, namely, to subject the vast majority of the people to cruel, discriminatory laws, restricting them from development, so as to keep them in perpetual subjugation and domination. All this is done in the national interests of a tiny minority of the class that is dominating that country.

Therefore, any policy on the national question which does not take into consideration the fundamental right of all nationalities to self-determination, independence and national equality, cannot hope to be a fair and permanent solution.

China, a huge multi-racial country whose various nationalities have created their own history and culture, is making a practical contribution to solving this fundamental question.

When the People's Republic of China was founded in October, 1949, with over 60 nationalities, they adopted definite principles as their guide. Their main principle was to wipe out completely the enmity and misunderstanding among nationalities, left over from a long history of oppression of national minorities, both by the Hans (the largest national group in China) and by foreign and local oppressors.

China did not mechanically apply principles borrowed from other lands. The Chinese leaders first set themselves the task of going to the people and discussing their problems with them, to get a proper assessment of actual conditions prevailing in the areas inhabited by various national groupings. From the outset they knew that no policy towards nationalities would be worth anything unless supported by proper consultation and co-operation from the people concerned. Consultation and co-operation, therefore, became the keynote of their research work.

They carefully analysed the existing historical relations among the nationalities, coupled with the economic conditions in areas where different nationalities are concentrated. Thus they were able to formulate a policy that enjoys the support and co-operation of the various nationalities living within China and other territories within the Republic.

After conducting research work and holding consultations with the people, the leaders of the new Republic set themselves the task of drawing up a general programme, designed to entrench the fundamental rights of the various nationalities on the basis of national equality. This programme is drawn up in accordance with provisions of certain articles as follows:—

“(a) All nationalities within the boundaries of the People’s Republic of China shall have equal rights and duties.

“(b) All nationalities within the boundaries of the People’s Republic of China are equal. They shall establish unity and mutual aid among themselves, and shall oppose imperialism and public enemies in their midst, so that the People’s Republic of China will become a big fraternal and co-operative family, comprising all its nationalities. Greater nationalism and local nationalism shall be opposed. Actions involving discrimination, oppression and splitting the unity of the various nationalities shall be prohibited.

“(c) Regional autonomy shall be exercised in areas where national minorities are concentrated, and various kinds of autonomous organs for the different nationalities shall be set up according to the size of the respective populations and regions. In places where different nationalities live together and in the autonomous areas of the national minorities, the different nationalities shall each have an appropriate number of representatives in the local organs of the State power.

“(d) All national minorities within the boundaries of the People’s Republic of China shall have the right to join the People’s Liberation Army, and to organise local people’s public security forces in accordance with the unified military system of the State.

“(e) All national minorities shall have freedom to develop their spoken and written languages; to preserve or reform their traditions, customs and religious beliefs. The People’s Government shall assist the broad masses of all national minorities to develop their political, economic, cultural and educational construction work.”

REGIONAL AUTONOMY FOR NATIONALITIES

The fundamental policy of the People’s Republic of China, which is the key to the solution of China’s national question, is the establishment of national autonomous regions for nationalities. This policy, which enjoys the wholehearted support of the people of various nationalities, was laid down by the Republic as a solution of China’s national question. It is being implemented within the boundaries of China under the unified leadership of the Central People’s Government. The basic

principle is: to ensure that all national minorities enjoy the right of national equality, that is, equal rights in every respect for all nationalities; to help the nationalities develop politically, economically, culturally and educationally; to consolidate the unity among the various nationalities as well as within each nationality; to oppose domination by the majority nationality, as well as manifestation of narrow nationalism, so that all nationalities will be united in the common task of building their great country.

Due regard is given to the wishes of the people, and account is taken of the actual conditions prevailing in any area, in establishing national autonomous regions for nationalities. By June, 1952, 130 such national autonomous regions had been established throughout the country, in various regions inhabited by 4½ million people of different nationalities.

The following types of autonomous regions have been established:

- (1) Autonomous regions established on the basis of an area inhabited by one national minority.
- (2) Autonomous regions established on the basis of an area inhabited by one large national minority, including areas inhabited by other national minorities with very small populations, who likewise shall enjoy regional autonomy.
- (3) Autonomous regions jointly established on the basis of two or more areas, each inhabited by a different national minority.

These different types of national autonomous regions have come into existence because of differences in the existing relations among nationalities in economic and historical conditions, but they are all based on the free will of the people and on national equality. All national minorities living in compact communities are entitled to regional autonomy and the right to administer their own internal affairs in conformity with the wishes of the great majority of their people.

The third type of regional autonomy is established in areas where members of different national minorities live side by side, with the advantage of fostering co-operation and mutual aid among nationalities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF NATIONALITIES

Democratic coalition governments of nationalities may be established in provinces, regions, districts and villages where the inhabitants belong to two or more national minorities, or where the people of national minorities constitute less than 10 per cent of the local population.

These Democratic-Coalition governments are a form of State power at a local level. The same general principles apply to their organisation as to people's governments in other provinces and regions.

THE PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENTS

Due consideration is given to nationalities with relatively small populations. Great care is taken to respect the functions and powers of members from national minorities, and to consult with them fully on questions concerning national minorities.

In the various departments of the People's Government itself, every endeavour is made to absorb in their work personnel of national

minority origin; and these people are given every assistance with proper consideration for their ways of life.

Respect for national traditions, customs, religious beliefs is inculcated among all the people; and they are encouraged to promote unity and mutual assistance among nationalities, to outlaw national discrimination, oppression or any act tending to provoke dissension between nationalities.

RELATIONS AMONG NATIONALITIES

Not only is attention paid to the establishment of autonomous regions as a solution to their national question, but the Central People's Government also takes steps to strengthen the unity and friendly relations of the various nationalities, by despatching visiting missions to various regions, and having delegates from national minorities come to Peking for friendly meetings and other purposes. These goodwill missions have helped cement the bonds of friendship among the nationalities.

What is the outcome of all these undertakings? One clear result has definitely emerged: the various nationalities of China who, for a long period, have suffered national oppression and brutal discrimination, in the same way as do the overwhelming majority of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples of Africa, have today developed healthy relations among themselves. Their task is no longer to liberate themselves from national oppression, but to develop and raise themselves to the level of their new democracy, which is, undoubtedly, bringing about improvements in their material and cultural life.

To develop cultural work among the national minorities, extensive training of cadres is being undertaken, so that thousands are engaged in full-time work in various parts of the country.

POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONALITIES

With all these measures, one would be tempted to think that China's national problem has been solved. Far from it. The real solution must await the emergence of the national minorities from their political, economic and cultural backwardness, which, for them, is a kind of historical liability, because such backwardness hampers the people in their full enjoyment of the right to national equality.

Therefore, every effort is made to help them develop in the fields of political, economic, cultural and social life, so that they may emerge out of their backwardness into full and actual equality.

This has become one of the most important tasks of the State and the people's governments, at all levels: training and assigning cadres; assisting their trades; establishing health services; and fostering other aspects of their economy. Together with this is the urgent problem of creating a written language for some nationalities who have only a distinct spoken language of their own, but not a written one.

Thus today, in new China, the era of national oppression has given way to an era of national equality. The various nationalities, who, in the past, have lived a miserable life of starvation, disease, landlessness and political backwardness, are now marching forward shoulder to shoulder in a spirit of fraternal co-operation and national equality.

The first part of this article, which appeared in our last issue, dealt with the policy of the Chamber of Mines towards labour and wages, commencing with the Chamber's annual report for 1889, and showing how from the outset the Chamber's search for cheap labour led to the introduction of certain laws with widespread effect throughout South Africa.

THE GREAT CONSPIRACY

PART II

DESPITE their constant difficulty in finding adequate numbers of African labourers to fill their compounds at constantly declining wages, the Chamber of Mines set itself resolutely against the employment of white labourers. Deeply prejudiced as they were against the native people of Africa, whom they contemptuously referred to as "savages," their class interests led them to fear white labourers even more. In a letter to Colonel F. H. P. Cresswell, written in 1902, Percy Tarbutt writes:

"I have consulted the Consolidated Goldfields people and . . . Messrs. Wernher, Beit & Co. (forerunner of the present Corner House group) and the feeling seems to be one of fear that if a large number of white men are employed on the Rand in the position of labourers, the same troubles will arise as are now prevalent in the Australian Colonies, i.e. that the combination of the labouring classes will become so strong as to be able to more or less dictate not only on questions of wages, but also on political questions."

Commenting on the Tarbutt letter, George Farrar, one of the Rand mining magnates, had this to say to the Transvaal Legislature late in 1903.

"What did Mr. Creswell do? He was endeavouring to introduce unskilled white labourers to work below a living wage . . . What does the importation of unskilled whites mean? It means labour combinations . . . no one is satisfied . . . you will have nothing but discontent and strikes . . ."

The mine owners solidly opposed any attempt to introduce unskilled white labour. In preference, they turned their attention to recruiting non-white labour from other areas, while continually pressing for measures to compel the local African men to leave their rural homes. Missions from the Chamber scoured the world, looking for ready supplies of cheap and docile labour. Reports of agents came in from as far afield as the Congo, India, Egypt, Madagascar, Abyssinia and

China. They throw interesting light on the aims and outlook of the Chamber. H. Ross Skinner, for example, reporting to the W.N.L.A. on his mission to the Far East, reports:

“A very potent force amongst the Chinese (in America) is a system of co-operation somewhat akin to freemasonry. They understand well the power and advantages to be gained from combination. In San Francisco there are six Chinese Companies or Guilds. Such societies, comprehensive as they are, if established on the Rand . . . might be useful and beneficial, but their power might also become a danger, especially if they could suppose that the mines were entirely dependent on the Chinese for unskilled labour. To avoid such an emergency it is plainly desirable that all the present efforts to increase the supply of Kaffir labour should be vigorously continued, with a view to balancing as far as possible, the supply of Kaffir, Chinese and other unskilled labourers.”

In case the clear intent to divide and rule is not understood, Ross Skinner adds:

“This principle might also be adopted in the case of Chinese from different districts. For instance, experience points to the fact that it is unlikely that Northern men would co-operate with the Southern Chinese.”

Once the great debate on the importation of unskilled white labour had been won by the Chamber of Mines, its policy of recruiting labour from far and wide was energetically pursued. But as always, there was the twin aim: Get the labour! But get it cheap!

In a letter to the High Commissioner for Uganda and Mombasa, written in November, 1900, the Chamber discusses the question of pay for labourers recruited from those territories.

“The Chamber understands that the rate of pay, when they do work, is a dollar a month.” Enclosing a copy of the Chamber’s schedule of pay rates, which lay down a minimum of 30s. and a maximum of 35s. for thirty shifts, five weeks, the letter carefully points out, however, that “. . . It would be necessary to stipulate for a lower rate of pay at the offset than that shown in the schedule, in order to recoup the cost of bringing the natives to the Transvaal, which may be from £6 to £8 a head. A minimum, however, of 13s. a month would probably be adopted . . .”

A new principle is introduced into South African wage scales for African workers. Those who are brought from afar, because people nearer at hand will not accept the miserly wage scales, are to pay the cost of their transportation themselves. It is a principle which successive South African Governments, especially the Nationalist Government, have extended to wider spheres.

But still the Chamber ploughed a hard, uphill furrow. Constantly their competitors for African labour would raise the rates of pay above those paid on the mines. In 1901, the Johannesburg Town Council decided to recruit some two hundred and fifty labourers from Delagoa Bay, **“to be employed in sanitary work at the rate of not less than 1s. 8d. per diem.”** The Chamber of Mines protested strongly. In a letter to the Town Council it enclosed again its schedule of wage rates, stipulating a minimum of 1s. and a maximum of 1s. 2d. per shift.

“I may add,” writes the Chamber’s Secretary, **“that at the present moment natives on some mines are receiving less than 30s. per month of 30 days, the fixed minimum has been suspended . . . My Committee would ask your Council to consider whether it cannot accept the Chamber’s schedule, as such a course would be equally advantageous to your body . . . as to the mines; while on the other hand, if your Council pay the highest rate of 1s. 8d. per diem, it will increase the cost of your labour, and possibly embarrass the operations of the W.N.L.A. which collects the labour for the mines . . .”**

The Health and Measures Committee of the Town Council was duly impressed. Its reply to the Chamber it says that it will be recommended to the Town Council that they **“come to some understanding with your Chamber in regard to wages . . . While attaching the greatest weight to the question of maintaining moderate wages, the duty of carrying out the sanitation of the town without interruption is of paramount importance to this Committee.”**

The rebuke apparently failed to pierce the self-important skins of the Chamber of Mines. By the following year, 1902, the Chamber was negotiating with the Governor-General of Mozambique for a monopoly to be granted to the W.N.L.A. to recruit in the territory. In its proposals for agreement on this monopoly, it suggests that the Mozambique Company, the largest, almost the only large employer of labour in that territory, should adopt the Chamber wage scale of 30s. per 30 shifts.

“In support of this proposal,” writes the Chamber’s Secretary, **“. . . my Chamber is informed that, whereas at present the mines in the Mozambique Company’s territory have to pay as high as 50s. per month for native labour, whether skilled or unskilled, the effect of placing all recruiting and supply of native labour under the control of the Association (W.N.L.A.), will secure the desired general reduction of wages to 30s.”**

Not surprising, therefore, that the 1902 regulations for the admission of Portuguese Native Labour to the Transvaal contain the following provisions:

“An armed guard will accompany each train from Komatipoort to Johannesburg and no natives will be allowed to leave the train except by military order.

“On arrival at the Rand, natives will be confined in compounds under military guard until distributed.”

During the same year, it came to the notice of the Chamber that certain contractors on the mines were paying their own African labourers wages which were above the scale laid down by the Chamber.

“As a result a large number of boys employed directly by the Companies are rendered discontented by the higher wages paid the small number in the service of the contractors.” It recommended to the W.N.L.A. that “. . . no Company shall permit the employment of any natives except such as hold the Company’s passports and are supplied and paid by the Company, are subject to its regulations, and treated in all respects as employees of the Company.”

The growing trend at interference in the wage rates of other employers, even other countries, was significant. The Chamber of Mines by 1902 had established itself as the real economic might, the real power behind the throne in the Transvaal. Its control, then as now, spread far beyond the boundary fences of the mining properties; governments governed by its agreement; town Councils held office by the Chamber’s grace; industries and commerce bowed down to the patterns dictated by the Chamber through its control of the financial bloodstream of the land. This was the era of imperialism, the era of the conquest of the Transvaal by the forces of British imperial power. And though the “thin red line” may have been the symbol of that era, the Chamber of Mines was—and is—the real controlling power of the era.

In complete harmony with its real position of power was the Chamber’s proposal of 1902, made to a Commission of Inquiry into “. . . certain details in connection with the extension of the boundaries of the Municipality of Johannesburg.”

“It was suggested,” says the Chamber’s annual report, “that when an elective Town Council was substituted for the present nominated one, the Mining Companies should be entered on the Voters’ Rolls, and should get one vote for each £1,000 of rateable property . . . separate wards being formed for the mining areas; and that in matters affecting the mines . . . special By-Laws should be drafted and submitted to the mining wards for approval, arbitration to follow if agreement could not be arrived at.”

A power above the common law; a State within a State. Imperium in imperio. This is the authentic voice of the mining magnates, as it was fifty-three years ago.

Nor is it vastly different from their position today. As the years have passed, the blatant advertising of their imperialistic aims, and of their sinister conspiracy against the unity, the well-being and the liberty of their workers, has been covered over with a veil of silence. It is no longer possible to read the letters, the discussions and the debates which go on inside this State within the State. The Chamber conducts its most intimate business today in secret. But the power is there, just as it was, with the same twin aims. Get the labour! Get it cheap! And keep it cheap and docile by division.

THOUGHTS ON LITERATURE AMONG AFRICANS

By **EZEKIEL MPHAHLELE**

IT is always very difficult to say at any time what people like to read. Just as in dress and food, popular taste in literature is a slippery element to deal with. Often it can be tyrannical, or tame, or indifferent, or downright crude and vulgar, or just stupid.

And so we keep shifting our literary standards, taking up new positions in judging this or that literary work. And more often than not, modes of life determine what we want to read and therefore what we want to write for our readership.

One may get the impression that the reading public is always at the mercy of writers and what they give us. And yet, I think, political and economic systems play an important role in determining what people shall write and read.

The Victorians gave us a literature greatly affected by industrial revolutions, the religious and moral outlook of the age on major experiences of life like death, birth, love, family (where the father is the boss without any apologies), etc.

Read Dickens, Thackeray, Carlyle, Meredith, Hardy, George Eliot or any other Victorian writer, and you see Victorian morals reflected in them. And naturally, because a writer cannot and dare not try to live outside his age.

It is worth noticing, however, the different aspects of life that interest writers of the same age. Dickens' sympathies are with the underdog, the poor, the feeble-minded and the like; he shows the sham of snobbery and corruption among the rich and highly placed for what they are; and often the aristocrat turns out to be the father of an illegitimate child who is really a victim of a brutal man-made social machine.

Thackeray focuses his attention on Victorian snobbery. Thomas Hardy reveals the fatalistic scepticism of his age. All these and others are various facets of Victorian morality and life.

But even the more rebellious English writers like Dickens, notwithstanding his insight into the sordidness of Victorian society that creates poverty, feeble-mindedness, etc., never really shakes off his loyalty to the ruling class. Dickens never suggests in his novels a revolution in the status quo to upset the political and social tenor of the British. Instead, he seeks reforms in existing laws, and suggests individual philanthropic kindness towards the poor.

To show further how the true artist cannot help but give expression to the best that he looks forward to against the background of his environment, we may refer to writers like Dostoyevsky, Pushkin, Chekov, Tolstoy, Gorky. The writer of this article is not familiar enough with post-revolutionary Russian creative writings to comment upon

them, but he cannot imagine it otherwise. In the writers mentioned we get the pattern of Czarist oppression and the social injustices it bred. When we read them, we see a bigness that goes beyond themselves. They are dissatisfied with the world they live in, and they think of the society of their times in relation to the rest of the world. The conflict between good and evil with which they are preoccupied assumes in their works immense proportions—larger than life.

Our age is still too close for us to judge its writers objectively. But there are a number of writers who are discontented with ruling class ideas. D. H. Lawrence gave a close-up picture of domestic conflict against the background of British coal mines; he had a contempt for success, which he referred to as a bitch after which men chase with tongues hanging out. Then there are writers like the American, Howard Fast; the British, E. M. Forster and John Galsworthy; the Indian, Mulk Raj Anand; the Italian Ignazio Silone—to mention only some.

And what literature do we, Africans, want to produce? Vernacular writings have been confined to school readership up to now. This is a disaster, because school inspectors must advise publishers on any book written in the vernacular on its suitability or otherwise for pupils. If it contains anything that is likely to “put the reader wise” on the South African political set-up, it cannot be published. And so, writers like Mofolo, Segoete, Vilakazi, Plaatjie, Mqhayi, Jolobe, etc., limit their literature to harmless if charming romances, versified praises and other lyrical vapourings and love stories. They hardly touch the fringe of the poetry of our social evils and injustices.

Their works are gems for their own sake, “lying in state” as it were, or standing still like statuettes, if you like. They lack the dynamic force that hits all the planes of our experience—the emotional, physical, and intellectual; they are parochial; not because the writers lack force, but because they had to limit their literature to the school market dictated by “educationists” and missionaries. They do not tell the whole truth about life.

From an analysis of the story as told to the writer by those who read Xhosa, I realize that Mr. A. C. Jordaan’s novel “Ingqumbo Yeminyanya” (The Wrath of the Ancestral Spirits) is a significant departure. It brings in the intellectual interest, so absent in our other men. It is a great pity that he has not given us more of his powerful creative genius.

He portrays the clash between two sides of our life—the Western Christian and the traditional. In a sense it is an allegory of the mightier ironic conflict between systems of life that may need each other to create a greater world.

Except for Peter Abrahams, the short story has now become the common medium of the younger African authors who write in English. And what short stories! They teem with kissing men and women whose “eyes hold” while “time stands still”; characters swoon and languish

and dissolve in their sentimental tears, and "smoke raised with the fume of sighs" clouds everything else.

The lovers end up sweetly and live happily ever after; and everybody in the story, the writer included, suffocates helplessly under the tyranny of poetic justice that screams hoarsely in well-known American fashion: "crime does not pay!"

The pattern is so well known, that we yawn over it. It's purely a mathematical response: a breathtaking meeting and a sigh; a heart-break and tears; a solution and happiness. Typical escapist literature that is a poor copy of Hollywood and half-crown thrillers.

It is as if the magazines produced for our reading were sick with the smell of pin-ups and sex and crime that fill so much of their pages, and then became contrite and sought some atonement and peace of conscience in sickly moralising as we see it in their short stories.

We should like to think that this is a passing phase, and that Africa will yet produce a virile literature born of its sufferings, its weakness, its trials and its strength.

Morals don't come into the picture at all, especially the preachers' ethics. Crime often pays: that is the tragedy of life worth portraying. How many loves have a happy ending? Is life not full of loves and hates that promise no reward or punishment at all? Is life not pain and hope as well? Do "good" men get a "just" reward and do "bad" men get what we think they deserve?

Any literature that gives wrong answers to these questions falsifies the scheme of things, and it is good for the rubbish bin. We know now that morals are always dictated by the ruling class. If the ruling class justifies oppression on "moral" grounds, then the rest of society, its organization, its newspapers, its literature, if its members are not on the alert, adopts corrupt political systems as morally acceptable.

What should guide the African writer then? No clique should tell a writer or any other artist what to do. If he is a true artist, he will express the longings, aspirations, loves and hates, hopes and frustrations of his people, without necessarily writing as if he were composing a political treatise.

The writer should be guided by **truth**. And truth, as Howard Fast says, **is only valid in its historical context**. One writer may write a novel with a plot based on a location riot. If he does not like to tell the truth or even fears it, he will give us a picture of Africans going on a riot because they are depraved (through their own fault), or peace-haters, or neurotic malcontents, or the sort of political crank Alan Paton would like us to see in Rev. Kumalo's brother.

Now, in a historical context, this could not be a true account, knowing the origin, development of locations and the purpose and motives of their creation as well as we do.

The correct account would be one that shows the real causes of the riot; the sense of insufficiency and overcrowdedness and limitation which breed desperation and so on, as we know them in location life. That is truth.

This element of truth is part of what we call **tone** in writing. If we write in order to startle the reader by some false alarm; or jolt him by a sensational trick; or bluff him; or flatter him; or talk down to him; or insult his intelligence, then the tone is false, truth suffers, and the whole work crumbles.

Lastly, a slave or fascist mentality violates truth, and cannot produce literature worth thinking about, because of its attitude to the reader, i.e. its bad tone.

All of us who have a slave mentality are apt to accept others' ideas without question; to make stock responses to what we read, hear or see; to say "how beautiful!" of what we do not **feel** is so; to have ready-made formulas in our response to all or most things. No great literature can come of such a mentality.

ADVENTURE, 1955

By **HILDA WATTS**

WHEN I was young, we were fascinated with the idea of 'Adventure.' As children, adventure to us meant exploring countries that had not been explored—jungles, frozen wastes, deserts—or discovering something new. It seemed to us that there would not be much left for us when we grew up, the world was shrinking, there were no 'new' or 'undiscovered' places.

Then, when we grew older, 'adventure' had a different meaning. Science advanced with giant strides, opening up to mankind so much that had always been secret or unknown: discovering the causes of, and conquering diseases that had once menaced humanity; controlling nature; exploring the universe and uncovering new theories of the development of mankind; until within the past few years our horizons expanded boundlessly with the control of the atom, opening up breathless vistas for the future.

With this one, but tremendous, reservation: that these new secrets wrested from nature should not be used to destroy us.

Every new scientific and technical advance brings with it a tinge of fear. What wonders could be performed with atomic energy—provided it is not used for our own destruction; how exciting to think we are beginning to conquer outer space with the proposed launching of satellites round the earth—provided this is not merely for the development of some new, horrible weapon of war. We are racing against time: will we be able to reorganise society, to eliminate all wars and end all poverty, backwardness and ignorance, before the world is destroyed?

Yes, we know it can be done, with knowledge and understanding on the part of the people. The people themselves are seeking the way. In our country, the Congress of the People marked a great stride forward to the liberation of Africa, so essential for the preservation of world peace. But if we are to understand clearly what path must be taken, how to organise, what to do, then we must have the constant exchange and clash of ideas—"Practice without theory is blind. Theory without practice is sterile."

It was in the belief that a forum was needed for the discussion and debate of ideas that LIBERATION was started, more than two years ago. That such a magazine has been greatly needed was shown by the instantaneous welcome that LIBERATION received, and also by the substance of the articles it has published, many of which have broken entirely new ground, or provoked much thought and discussion.

But LIBERATION, through its erratic and unsatisfactory appearance, has not maintained itself, nor developed in the way that it should. And we felt the time had come for an explanation, and some re-statement of aims, if LIBERATION is to continue publication.

Most of our difficulties stem from the nature of this journal—"A Journal of Democratic Discussion"—which invites contributions from democrats of all shades of opinion on matters of political, economic, cultural and scientific interest. As our readers know, more and more such free discussion is being circumscribed in our country. Too many people are becoming afraid—afraid to speak out, afraid to give financial support to democratic organs, afraid to print anything in real opposition to the fascistic rulers of our country.

Hence we have struggled for months with troublesome technical problems, which caused endless delays in the appearance of LIBERATION.

These difficulties have been partially overcome, at least for the time being. But the whole existence of LIBERATION depends on the month-by-month support it receives from progressive people. This means not only financial support, which is essential for continued publication; not only literary support, in the form of letters and articles, which are the life-blood of the magazine; but also the active support that only politically conscious and progressive people can give: reading LIBERATION; debating its contents; discussing the importance of certain articles or statements of view; showing it to neighbours and friends; enrolling subscribers; **utilising it as a weapon in our freedom struggle.**

From now on, we are going to produce LIBERATION more regularly. But what are you going to do? Do you want this magazine to continue publication, to improve, to grow? Is it necessary? Can we achieve it? Yes, definitely yes, if our circle of readers will hold themselves responsible with us for its publication and development, so that LIBERATION can truly fulfil its role in guiding our land on the road to freedom. And that, after all, is the greatest and most exciting adventure of our time.

THE FREEDOM CHARTER

ADOPTED AT THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE AT
KLIPTOWN, JOHANNESBURG, ON JUNE 25-26, 1955,

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 all the people.

THE PEOPLE SHALL GOVERN!

ALL NATIONAL GROUPS SHALL HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS!

THE PEOPLE SHALL SHARE IN THE COUNTRY'S WEALTH!

THE LAND SHALL BE SHARED AMONG THOSE WHO WORK IT!

ALL SHALL BE EQUAL BEFORE THE LAW!

ALL SHALL ENJOY EQUAL HUMAN RIGHTS!

THERE SHALL BE WORK AND SECURITY!

THE DOORS OF LEARNING AND OF CULTURE SHALL BE OPENED!

THERE SHALL BE HOUSES, SECURITY AND COMFORT!

THERE SHALL BE PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP!

Let all who love their people and their country now say, as we say here: "THESE FREEDOMS WE WILL FIGHT FOR, SIDE BY SIDE, THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES, UNTIL WE HAVE WON OUR LIBERTY."

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LIBERATION is published ten times a year. Send ten shillings for one year, or five shillings for six months to:—

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IT'S UP TO YOU

It is well-known that the cost of printing newspapers and magazines is not covered by the money obtained from their sales. The one who pays for those pages and pages of print is the advertiser, the firm urging you to smoke this, drink that, wear this and buy that.

There are no advertisements in **LIBERATION**. The question then arises — who pays for the printing of this magazine?

The answer is a simple one. Unless you, reader and supporter of **LIBERATION**, help us pay for printing costs, then we get in such difficulties that we cannot issue the magazine regularly.

We can't rely on advertisers. The policy and contents of our magazine obviously will not appeal to them. We cannot cover printing costs by the amount each reader pays for his copy—it is insufficient. That is why we have to have your support—you, if you think that this is a worthwhile publication.

Send us a donation for our Printing Fund. Collect regularly from your friends — however small the amount, it all helps. Let's keep **LIBERATION** going. Let's do more — with just a bit of extra money we can improve the appearance and increase the contents of the magazine. What about it?