

AFRICAN NATIONALISM TO-DAY.

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I have been asked by the sponsors of the summer school to prepare a lecture on African Nationalism To-day. Whilst I am deeply sensible of the honour implied in the invitation I must point out that I cannot imagine what prompted the organisers to entrust upon me the task of interpreting the most vital motive force in African politics to-day. I hope their faith in the lecturer will be justified.

It is not my intention, nor indeed is it possible to give an exhaustive treatment of African Nationalism here today. I will content myself with a short survey and point rather than dwell on the basic ideas that inspire African Nationalists, not only in South Africa but throughout the entire African continent.

THE PROBLEM ANALYSED: Each idea or creed arises to meet a particular need that arises from certain definite conditions. African Nationalism is no exception. In so far as South Africa is concerned what is the situation that presents itself as a challenge to the African Nationalists?

1. South Africa is a multi-racial country inhabited by no less than four or five racial groups. Firstly there is the majority group- the Africans, who are the original inhabitants and owners of the country. Secondly there is the big minority group- the Europeans- who consist of the Afrikaners and the English. Then there are the Coloureds and finally the Indians. A situation such as this in which four or five groups with different racial origins and cultures, and completely intergrated in one socio-economic system is probably unique. In the complexity of its multi-racial society, South African can be compared to pre-revolutionary Russia, where there existed myriads of racial groups and nations antagonistic to one another; and it was only through a revolution which ushered in complete equality and an end to racial discrimination and national oppression that it was possible to create the solidly united multi-national state- the Soviet Union.

2. South Africa is a colonial country. But it is not a typical colonial country. In the typical colonial situation such as we find in the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Malaya or Indo-China, there is no attempt on the part of the imperialist to settle in the country. A small official, missionary and business caste comes and lives in the colonial country- not to settle- but to supervise the exploitation of the colonial country in the interests of their imperialist ruling-class in the metropolitan country. In such a situation the imperialists are obliged to obtain the support of a middle or capitalist class from among the oppressed to assist them in their exploitation of the majority. They also make use of the oppressed in the administration of law and order in the colony. Very often this same "Native" middle class breaks away from the imperialist group and leads the anti-imperialist struggle in order that it might become the sole exploiter or at any rate get the bigger share that it was getting.

In South Africa, however, whilst it is true that a section of the imperialists is to be found in Britain, France, U.S.A., etc. a big section has settled here in South Africa and made this country its home. This means a more complete control of political and economic power than is possible in a typical colonial country is practised here. The European oppressor Group has a complete monopoly of political, economic, military and administrative power. Because of the existence of this fairly large settler group which has a stake in the system it has been possible for the imperialists to be more ruthless in their exploitation of the Africans with

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result that no middle class (or capitalist class) worth talking about among the Africans has emerged, nor is there ever likely to be one. Instead there exists a large landless, labouring group which constitutes the only basis for any National Movement of Liberation, as far as the Africans are concerned.

3. South Africa is a capitalist country, but it is a backward capitalist country. The fundamental structure is feudal with a modern facade. The economy is dominated by the backward and feudal mining and farming interests which are a brake on the development of a modern industrialised country. Thus the economy is characterised by MIGRANT LABOUR, labour tenancy or serfdom, pass laws, farm goals etc. The economy is not based on Use values but on Illusory values.

4. The African people are not oppressed solely as a Class. They suffer double oppression. They suffer economic exploitation as workers and labourers and oppression and humiliation as a Nation. One of the characteristics of the class society is its mobility, which allows a man from a lower class to rise to a higher class or vice versa. Here in South Africa because of the National or Caste oppression the African has the door to progress slammed in his face whether he is a peasant labourer in the farms or a medical practitioner.

What has been the reaction of the African to these conditions and what aims and objectives do African Nationalists pursue in the face of the tremendous challenge of the South African situation.

Before dealing with African Nationalism as propounded by the African National Congress, we might mention three or four types of Nationalism from which it must constantly be distinguished.

(a) There is the Nationalism of Hitlerite Germany, Franco-Spain and Fascist Italy. This Nationalism was based on the doctrine of blood relationship and superiority of one race over all others. This vicious false and unscientific doctrine was utilised by manna to launch their aggression against the world. This form of Nationalism we call Fascism and we find expression of this kind of Nationalism in the Nationalist Party of South Africa.

(b) Then there is the imperialist nationalism of the British, which is characterised by a belief in the destiny of the British people to rule over and civilise "barbarian" peoples. France has also got more than its fair share of this kind of Nationalism. This messianic complex is now being taken over more and more by the Americans who see themselves as destined to lead the world and to teach the world's backward peoples the superiority of the "American way of life".

(c) Finally, we have the Nationalism that teaches Love of one's country, people, language and culture.

AFRICAN NATIONALISM: African Nationalism is a development of this latter type of Nationalism. Its aim is to instigate in the Africa people Love of Afrika, its people, languages and cultures. It is based on the ideal of the complete unification of all the different tribes and peoples of Afrika into a single Nation within a single Pan-African State. Furthermore it seeks for the African people and indeed all Peoples, Democracy, Self-Determination, Political Power and Independence; Complete Equality, Land, Economic progress and Culture for all peoples in Afrika.

African Nationalism does not aim at freedom for the Africans only. But it looks upon the African people as Master, Inheritor and Leader, whose historic task is to protect and struggle for the freedom not only of the Africans, but of all oppressed minorities and national groups in Afrika. In this historic role which is best expressed in the African word "UBUNTU", African Nationalism reveals itself as a progressive force which is at once with the March of all humanity towards a better world in which man's inhumanity to man shall be a thing of the past. Thus African Nationalism is not inherently anti-any nation or group. But it is decidedly anti-oppression and anti-imperialism wherever it is found.

As regards the methods whereby their aims will be achieved African Nationalists believe that this will not come about through smiling and being sweet and reasonable with the imperialists. The only weapon in the hands of the Africans and other oppressed peoples lies in the creation of powerful National Movements based on the toiling masses and led by the revolutionary intelligentsia.

Such an organisation by tapping to the full the tremendous creative power and strength of the Africans' labour power can remove the present structure of society in South Africa and usher in a Democratic, United, Free and Prosperous Society in which Racialism will be outlawed. It is to the creation of such organisation or rather the development of the African National Congress to its full potential strength that the efforts of all genuine African patriots must be directed.

The African is a realist and therefore African Nationalism takes into account the fact that this continent of ours is the last playground of the imperialist powers. It is ruled by no less than six different Western powers, including Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal etc. This means that the struggle to free Africa involves a struggle against the major Western powers who are supported in their plans by the U.S.A. In other words the freedom of Africa- the second largest continent will be a tough struggle whose end will see the end of imperialism in the world. In other words the freedom of Africa, with its vast resources which are desired by all, is not a local problem. It is an international problem that calls into question the existence of imperialism all over the world. It is for this reason that in recent times African Nationalism has developed a clear and unambiguous international policy of allying itself with all oppressed and colonial peoples in the world who are fighting the Western Imperialist powers, and also with those independent countries which support the African struggle for freedom genuinely and with no strings attached.

These constitute the leading ideas of all genuine African Nationalists that are struggling for freedom and democracy. Not alone in the African National Congress but also in the National Movements in West Afrika, in East and Central Afrika, these ideas are the force behind the movements that will spell doom to imperialism and racialism within the near future.

No power on earth can stop the forward march of the African people and their allies. The lilliputian efforts of the Malans and others to turn the clock back by means of barbarian and repressive laws, are futile. Mankind in the latter part of the twentieth century is ready for a final qualitative leap to a new stage in the advance of mankind. History dictates that Afrika must be free in order that it might be able to make its proper contribution in this mighty movement.

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