

\* The following article was sent to the Inkundla for publication.

A REPLY TO <sup>6</sup> J. MATTHEWS' ARTICLE:

"Africans and Non-European Unity"

(Appearing in "Inkundla Ya Bantu", 22/10/49).

It may be wondered why we waste precious time in answering the irresponsible fulminations of youth when it is obviously intoxicated with the heady wine of its own verbosity. We might dismiss them with the contempt they deserve were it not for that very irresponsibility which throws political terms in the air without the slightest conception of their real import, as if it were a game of pitch and toss. We believe in sport for children, in the right place. Let them play by all means, but with the proper toys. It would be churlish to begrudge the boys and girls at those unpleasant institutions, the missionary-controlled schools, their innocent pastimes. Their youthful exuberance must find some outlet. We can even understand the Inkundla, whatever its reasons - be it to provide relief for the suppressed youngsters, or because of its own disappointment with the old leadership, or just from plain, good-humoured indulgence of youth - feigning to represent these young people as the leaders of the African masses.

But when the young students begin to take themselves seriously it is time to cry: halt! When, in addition to this, we remember these all too frequent occasions at school when "distinguished" visitors (European) solemnly inform them, albeit with the tongue in the cheek, that they, the educated youth, are the future leaders of their people - then we begin to be afraid lest those youngsters will acquire a grossly exaggerated conception of their own importance. We can only regret the somewhat ridiculous spectacle of school-boys, still in swaddling clothes, clumsily trying to manipulate the heavy mantle of leadership that has been thrust upon them. After all, these are our children of whom we nourish great hopes. We do not like to see their proper development being endangered. It is a sound educational theory that states that any attempt to encourage a child to be precocious, by forcing development beyond his proper stage (i.e. of age and capacity) actually endangers his further development.

Apart from these considerations, however, in so far as Mr. J.G. Matthews takes it upon himself to be the mouthpiece of the Congress Youth League, and, in addition to this, to be the advocate and champion of the M.R.C.s, and in so far as none of these groups have challenged the right of this young Sir Galahad to win his spurs by taking up the sword on their behalf - we feel it necessary to examine certain points. Be it understood that we are not seriously concerned with the young man's political struttings and caperings as such. In his self-assumed role it may well be that he is labouring under the spell of those romantic lines of the Victorian poet, Tennyson:

"My good blade carves the casques of men,  
My tough lance thrusteth sure,  
My strength is as the strength of ten  
Because my heart is pure."

Or perhaps he is under the influence of that modern bioscope hero, Pop-eye, who can move mountains as soon as he has stuffed himself with a tin of spinach.

Be this as it may. We are concerned with the serious political implications behind such articles. If the two articles, "Africans and Non-European Unity" (Inkundla, 22/10/49) and "The N.R.C. in Perspective" (Inkundla, 29/10/49) are the considered expression of the Congress Youth League standpoint - and we have no reason to believe otherwise - then it is necessary to take cogni-

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sance of the political tendencies they reveal. In this way we may assess their political position and know them for what they are. More than this, it is necessary to know how they arrive at certain philosophical conclusions - if such they may be called. For a long time we have been waiting to know what is meant by this "African Nationalism" of which we hear so much and which appears to generate so much emotionalism. Now these articles have given us some inkling as to its nature.

When we brush aside the flowery language, the histrionics and the verbiage, we are left with mis-statements, distortions and downright ignorance. It becomes evident that the whole basis for political action (as here outlined) is a wrong one. The premises are false and lead to false and absurd conclusions and contradictory statements. Let us examine some of the arguments that lead to his "pure and unadulterated African Nationalism." He writes:

"The African nation throughout the continent is possessed of similar aspirations, common characteristics of language, and common psychological expressions of their lives as revealed in a common culture."

This may sound imposing, but a little examination exposes its emptiness. Where is this common culture amongst the many peoples of Africa? Between, for example, the Egyptians and the Basutos, the Abyssinians and the Hereros of South West Africa, the inhabitants of the Gold Coast and the Transkei? Where are the common characteristics between the Nguni languages and the language of the Egyptians, between Sutu and the language of the Algerians, which is mainly Arabic? As for the "common psychological expressions of their lives", the "God of Africa" and young Matthews alone know what that means. Yet it is on such windy assertions that he erects his imposing structure. Not only are they false, but the questions of culture and language are entirely irrelevant as a basis for political struggle. What is more, it is out of this arrant nonsense that he builds a picture of "the dynamic forces inherent in Africanism", "pure and unadulterated African Nationalism" emerging triumphant to "crush ruthlessly" those who dare to criticise it.

With heedless zest he rushes headlong into the next folly. He writes: "It is a well-known fact that tolerance and the granting of full rights to all, without fear, is only possible where the majority of the moral owners of the land rule." From what world of fantasy did he pluck this "well-known fact"? Did Hitlerite Germany have tolerance because it was ruled by Germans? Was there tolerance in China under Chiang Kai-Shek? Was there tolerance in Franco's Spain or Italy under Mussolini? The mere fact that the rulers have a particular colour or belong to a particular race - be it indigenous or otherwise - has nothing to do with the question of tolerance.

Actually what is inherent in all this is a perverted racialism and Matthews betrays himself at every step, despite his loud protestations to the contrary. He goes on: "We believe that not only is the African capable of doing this (i.e. 'building a new, mighty civilisation in Africa') but that only he in this continent can do it." What is this if it is not herrenvolkism, the belief in the master-race? In Germany Hitler proclaimed that only the "pure" Aryans were capable of creating a German civilisation. In South Africa to-day the White herrenvolk claim that only the White race is capable of creating, and enjoying, civilisation. Note that the very essence of herrenvolkism is racialism. And now we have young Matthews expounding Black herrenvolkism. So steeped is he in the ideology of the master-race, so thoroughly has he imbibed the propaganda of the rulers, that without realising it he employs their very terminology. Where the White Nationalists appeal to the Holy Scriptures and to God to bolster up their divine right to rule, this young apostle of pure African Nationalism creates a special "God of Africa" in whose hands he places its destiny.

The truth is that Matthews, throughout his whole article - though he may not know it - is carrying through the ideas of the ruling-class. His attack on the Non-European Unity movement has its roots in the propaganda of the ruling class. He writes:

"The so-called Non-European unity which is preached to-day particularly by Conventionists, their Trotskyite friends, and renegade African 'intellectuals' is racialistic and reactionary."

He accuses others of what he himself is guilty of. This accusation is particularly inapt. For it is the rulers who accuse the Non-European Unity Movement of racial exclusiveness. But Matthews does not seem to realise that behind this accusation on the part of the herrenvolk lies a sinister purpose, namely, to cover up the real basis of unity, the common oppression and the common bond of slavery which alone dictates the common aspirations of the Non-Europeans.

But before we pursue this point further, let us observe, by the way, how the gallant youth tosses off political terms: "Trotskyite", "Reactionary", "renegade African". Does he know the meaning of the words he uses? It is clear that he does not begin to understand the whole philosophy which lies behind the word "Trotskyist", when it comes into being and why. He must have picked it up and thought it sounded good as a jibe to throw at political opponents, in some such way as those engaged in witch-hunts dub as "communist agitator" anyone who raises his voice in defence of his rights. But indeed, how should he be conversant with international political philosophy, when he cannot even use intelligently such simple words as "reactionary" and "renegade"? What is an "African renegade", Master Matthews? We prefer to think that he uses the words simply in ignorance of their true meaning. Any other supposition would be too damning in its implications. For, from the point of view of a White liberal or oppressor, an African who makes common cause with the Coloured and Indian oppressed is a "renegade", because for those oppressors and purveyors of pernicious racialism it is a matter of principle to keep these racial groups from uniting against oppression. And naturally, to them, whoever breaks this principle is a renegade. Indeed it is a matter of mortal fear to the rulers that the Non-Europeans should unite for that would demonstrate their realisation of the fundamental nature of their oppression. The rulers have spared neither time, energy nor money in their determination to keep the Non-Europeans divided. Through every form of propaganda in schools and pulpit, through radio and press, they have deliberately fostered an attitude of mind whereby the oppressed themselves accept and even cling to the idea of being separate entities in society. 'Divide and rule' has always been the corner-stone of White domination.

The herrenvolk might well be pleased at the effects of their insidious propaganda on the young apostles of African Nationalism. He writes:

"They (i.e. 'the renegade African intellectuals') say the Non-Europeans must unite because they are all oppressed by the Europeans. And the Non-Europeans must unite in order to fight this European. So that the bond of unity is the artificial and temporary one of fellow-slaves; its aim an anti-White front. These people go further and claim that without Non-European unity on this puerile basis, freedom is impossible."

Here we detect the influence of herrenvolk propaganda. The political bankruptcy of his ideas stands completely revealed. Quite inadvertently he pours scorn on what is the very crux of the issue. He holds up to ridicule that which is the only true and legitimate basis for political struggle. This ardent African Nationalist finds it possible to sneer at the only thing which is a powerful motivating force for unity of any oppressed peoples anywhere in the world, namely, the common bond of oppression and the common desire for freedom. Excelling himself in his pitiful gibing, he continues:

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"These superficial theoreticians forget that in Africa it is in the interests of the minorities to side with and join the Africans, not for the Africans to go out of their way to join in senseless locks on the basis of brothers-in-trouble to fight the Europeans." (Our emphasis).

But, Master Matthews, it is not your common cultures, your common linguistic traits, nor your "common psychological expressions" which provide a basis for political struggle; it is precisely this fact of brotherhood 'in trouble' - on which you pour such facile scorn - which constitutes the only sound basis. Whoever fails to understand this fundamental fact and whoever fails to take up his position on this fundamental principle, will be lost in the mire of political opportunism

And indeed you and your tribe are completely lost already. You are floundering in a sea of contradictions. At one moment you are vociferously proclaiming your ardent faith in non-collaboration and in the next you are as zealously defending the collaborators. You even go so far as to have us believe that the M.R.C.s are the non-collaborators par excellence. You do not do this out of a love for contradictions. You are driven to this attempt to square the circle by the sheer logic of your position.

With your usual superficiality you have been repeating the slogan of "Non-collaboration", but have you ever asked yourself what are its full implications? If you had, you would have understood that the whole conception underlying the slogan, "Non-collaboration", presupposes a unity based on identity of disabilities, interests and aspirations - brotherhood in oppression. But your "pure and unadulterated African Nationalism" scornfully rejects unity based on a common oppression. It follows that you are incapable of applying the principle of Non-collaboration. What are you going to do with your fellow nationals, who in spite of having your colour and culture, persist in carrying out collaboration? Even amongst the oppressed there are to be found those who are agents of the ideas of the herrenvolk. And these must be recognised as collaborators. No, Master Matthews, there is only one dividing line and that is between oppressor and oppressed. Whoever fails to understand this must end up on the same side as the M.R.C.s, i.e. for collaboration. It is therefore logical that the "pure and unadulterated African Nationalist" takes his place along-side his political progenitors, the M.R.C.s.

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3rd November, 1949.