



LIBERATION

ONE SHILLING.

No. 34, DECEMBER, 1958.

**THE FORMATION
OF NATIONS IN
AFRICA**

●
A Soviet View



A JOURNAL OF DEMOCRATIC DISCUSSION



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COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON

The "Liberation" Board wishes all readers a Merry Christmas, and advancement to freedom in the New Year.

Our resolution — to give you a better magazine in 1959. Yours should be to help us do so.

Editorial:

WAR AGAINST THE PEOPLE

EXCEPTIONAL interest attaches to this month's annual conference of the African National Congress. Always an event of major importance, this year's "parliament of the African people" meets against a background of dynamic developments in the outside world, of vast stirrings throughout the African continent, and of a steadily mounting crescendo of tension in the Union. The tension arises from the virtual war being conducted by the Government against the people.

General Smuts was often referred to by his admirers as a soldier turned philosopher — though, if the truth be told, he was not much of a hand at either, his talents lying in other directions. Dr. Verwoerd is reversing the process; he is the philosopher turned general. As Minister of Native Affairs he was not so much conducting a Department as a war, and as Prime Minister we have no doubt that he will, still more, continue this course. It is a war against the people, and in the first place against the African people; an aggressive, undeclared war; a brutal and ruthless war; a war against defenceless civilians, against women and children.

A friend of ours, who happens to be an Afrikaner, tells the story of a revealing incident during the Johannesburg bus boycotts last year. He was giving a carload of tired workers a lift home to Alexandra when they were halted by the usual police cordon near the Tower garage. "Pas, kaffer!" barked the law. "Maar, konstabel," remonstrated our friend, "Hoekom behandel jy hierdie mense so? Hulle is nie misdadigers nie." The cop looked at him pityingly. "Kan meneer nie verstaan nie? Hulle is die vyand."

They are the enemy! That is the mentality — not only unfortunately of the uneducated constable, newly-arrived perhaps from the platteland, but also of the "cultured" products of Stellenbosch and Potchefstroom universities, the educated savages who staff the Nationalist Party, Parliament, the Senate and the upper levels of the vast army of State servants. And it is they who teach and inculcate this vicious mentality among wide sections of the White population.

Such is the pitiless, inhuman, unyielding mentality of Verwoerdism and the Verwoerdists which confronts the African people of our country in their just struggles for freedom, equality and human dignity. The Nationalists do not know human beings, they only know light-skinned people

and dark-skinned people. They are perpetually at war, and every man is a soldier, wearing a uniform. His uniform is his skin, If it is dark, he is an enemy.

It says a tremendous amount for the moral superiority, maturity and political advancement of the African people (whom the Nationalists like to tell the outside world are primitive barbarians!) that under the leadership of the African National Congress, they have steadfastly refused to accept this false picture drawn by the Nationalists: the so-called "clash of colour." Instead they have seen the picture as it really is: as a clash of principles: on the one side, the Nationalists' principle of racial domination, autocracy and repression, utterly discredited and repudiated throughout the world outside South Africa; on the other side the principle of democracy and human rights, cherished and upheld by the United Nations and by ninety-nine per cent. of humanity.

That is why the Congress and its allies have won the sympathy and goodwill of all the world, and the Nationalists have earned universal disfavour and contempt. But the Nationalists have a hide like a rhinoceros when it comes to the disfavour of those who disagree with them; though they were condemned by every priest, statesman, footballer, athlete, trade unionist and professor in the world, and thrice excommunicated by the General Assembly, they will continue with their oppression and domination as long as there is a penny to be made out of sweated labour — and as long as they are allowed to get away with it!

Nor will sympathy and goodwill abroad — encouraging though such things are — in themselves enable the Congress to lead its people to the promised land. The Nationalists can be defeated and will be defeated in one way only: and that is by the overwhelming might of the democratic majority of the South African people themselves. That majority can only be effective in overcoming oppression and injustice when it is organised and disciplined; led in political action by a skilful, courageous and utterly determined leadership, unyielding and firm in principle but flexible and inventive in strategy.

To provide such leadership is the duty and the honour of the African National Congress, and that is precisely why, meeting at this critical phase of South African and world history, so much interest and importance attaches to the forthcoming A.N.C. Conference.

In 1949, shortly after the inauguration of the first Nationalist Government, the A.N.C. Conference adopted a Programme of Action. It has been falsely asserted by the Africanists (whose leaders have now openly taken up a separate stand and formed a separate organisation, outside and against Congress) that this 1949 "Programme" was a general statement of aims, conflicting with the Freedom Charter. It was nothing of the sort. It was, essentially, a plan of work, and a very good one too, the great majority of whose proposals have been successfully implemented by the A.N.C. leadership. It was a milestone in Congress history.

But today, after ten years of Nationalist misrule, conditions have changed very greatly: for the worse. New and vitally serious tasks face the movement. While adhering to the militant and imaginative approach of the 1949 plan, a new one is urgently called for, one that will take into account the changed conditions and vital problems of 1959.

Let us give an example of what we mean. Congress has traditionally demanded the abolition of pass-laws, and has led many a stirring campaign for this demand. But today the struggle against pass-laws has moved on to an entirely different and higher level: it has become practically a matter of survival for the African people.

THE BATTLE OF THE PASS

It is a far cry from the days when a Minister of Native Affairs could say that "the pass laws are the outstanding barrier to improved race relations," express public horror at the huge number of annual arrests arising out of these wicked laws, and promise to provide for their early abolition. The Minister was the late Deneys Reitz, and though he did not live to implement his promise, he did at least suspend the operation of some of the worst features of the pass laws during the last war.

Alas, Reitz was succeeded by Piet van der Byl, who undid all of Reitz's concessions. And then, following a brief reign by Dr. Jansen, until he was kicked upstairs to the Governor-Generalship, came the grim and terrible Verwoerd Era. Pass laws were extended (what Satanic impulse made the man call his law for this purpose, with the cruellest of irony, an "Abolition of Passes" Act?). The simple Pass became a whole Book: a volume of misery. The Native Affairs Department expanded monstrously, like a huge tick upon the body of the African people, swollen and engorged with blood.

Enforced with fanatical, lunatic intensity, the pass laws have become an endless, unendurable nightmare to the Africans. The occasional raid has become a never-ending military operation by the police against the people. By night and in the early hours of the morning, pickups, "nylons" and "kwelas" ply their continuous bus service between the townships and the jails. As the workers pour out of their trains and buses in the mornings, police teams bar their way. As they go about their business in the cities they are stopped by the hobo "ghost squad". Always the barked refrain from the dog-men: "Pas, kaffer!" Always through the streets the processions of black men, handcuffed one to the other, like victims of an Eighteenth Century slave raid chained on their way through the jungle to the sea, bound for America. And, indeed, what are these police but man-hunters on the raid? Or the farm jails but our "America" of today?

One would have thought, perhaps, that Verwoerd had already turned the screw of the pass system to the limit; that it was impossible to extract any further human suffering from this diabolical machinery of oppression. But that would have been to underestimate his ingenuity. With one stroke

he contrived to redouble the burden. He declared war on African women.

Perhaps no single action of the Nationalist Government, has provoked more deeply-felt resentment and opposition than this extension of pass laws to African women. The epic of the resistance of the women in town and country; the great rally of the 20,000 to Strijdom in Pretoria in 1956: these have already become a part of history.

At first, planning what pretended to be merely an administrative measure "in the interests of the Bantu women" as — what it really is — a military operation, General Verwoerd directed his early attacks upon the womenfolk of the rural areas, calculating that there the brave soldiers of the Native Affairs Department would meet but little effective resistance, and counting upon his gallant allies, his paid and bought Chiefs. He met some unexpected opposition and setbacks in the countryside. But — let us face the facts — he met with some success as well. Emboldened by these early victories (which will yet prove to be but temporary ones) and celebrating his elevation to the Prime Ministership, Verwoerd has now rallied all his forces in an all-out attempt to capture the greatest enemy stronghold.

He has attacked Johannesburg.

On the eve of the Congress conference, evoking a passionate storm of protest, aided by the tame and servile "Chiefs" of the Johannesburg City Council, the new, streamlined "Bantu" Department is trying to force passes upon the women of this great City, the nerve-centre alike of the country's economy and its democratic opposition.

The immediate reaction of Johannesburg's brave womenfolk was characteristic of the spirit of this great city. Within days, following the lead of the vanguard from the Western Areas, hundreds of women were demonstrating outside the pass office. When threatened with arrest, they did not flinch, but singing and giving the Congress salute, they entered the police "bus service" to the Fort. And they were arrested in their hundreds, day after day, until 2,000 had been taken to jail.

Many people must have recalled the great days of the 1952 Defiance Campaign as they saw or read about these events. And, no doubt about it, the action of these 2,000 had transformed the whole struggle overnight and raised it to a higher level. If Verwoerd and the City Council had hoped that pass books would quietly and secretly be issued to the domestic servants without any fuss, their hopes were speedily disillusioned.

But this is 1958, not 1952. The Defiance Campaign of 1952 was, in itself, a means of struggle and a clarion call to awaken the people. It gave Congress a new discipline, earnestness and purpose. It gave the people, who

had come to look on politicians as mere windbags, a new respect for and confidence in the organisation. It was a great turning point in Congress history.

Today, with many of its most eminent leaders on trial for their very lives, there is no longer any such need for the movement to prove its seriousness of purpose. Little by little the rule of law has been removed from South African public life. The laws themselves have been made a travesty of justice by Parliament. The mass political trial has become a familiar feature of Government policy. Savage penalties have been prescribed for "political" offences. To persist with 1952 tactics, under the mistaken impression that we would be able to induce a change of Verwoerd's policy by "filling the jails", would have merely been to swell the revenues of the Government; and to impose an intolerable burden of legal and welfare expenses upon this movement. The rule of law is fast disappearing in this Verwoerd Era, and the team of brilliant democratic lawyers, whose self-sacrificing efforts have so long served to defend the people's liberties in the face of the nascent police state apparatus, are finding their efforts less and less effective in the face of a totalitarian mass of legislation and the steady whittling away of the independence of the Courts. Filling the jails with people's leaders has become the aim of the Government itself. Perhaps a temporary large influx of additional jail inhabitants can temporarily "embarrass" the authorities, but they can always extend the available accommodation.

Thus, one of the important concepts behind the 1949 plan of work, which is related to the Gandhian "satyagraha" idea, is clearly inadequate to meet the completely changed conditions of 1959. New thinking and new plans are needed, and the same is true of many other facets of the people's struggle today: a new approach is needed to the ever-continuing battle to challenge the domination of the minds of the youth, which is Bantu Education; the absolute, totalitarian control of the people of the Reserves, which is Bantu Authorities; the inhuman regimentation, ruination and ghetto-isation, which is Group Areas; the starvation and misery, which is the cheap labour system; the creation of a uniform mass of Non-European unskilled labour, with no prospect of advancement, which is Job Reservation.

If we have chosen the Pass System to illustrate in somewhat more detail the root problem which now faces Congress, it is because in a very large measure, it underlies and serves to illustrate all the others. In a recent editorial on the Passes, the Johannesburg "Star" somewhat naively asked Congress what alternative it had to offer if passes were abolished. How would Congress, it asked, tackle the problem of countering the influx to the towns? The answer is very simple. South Africa is not the first country to be faced with the problems of industrialisation: in countries where some measure of freedom and popular democracy exist, the laws of supply and demand have been allowed to come into play. If fields of em-

ployment, such as farming and mining, offer too few inducements to workers to attract them in competition with industries in the towns, then those employers have been forced to offer higher wages and more attractive conditions of work. But the farming and mining employers, who dominate South Africa, have not been prepared to contemplate this alternative. Rather they have been prepared to impose the entire monstrous system of passes, terrorism, police control, injustice, humiliation — in a word: apartheid — upon the country. For the few exploiters this hateful system produces what they are after — cheap labour. But for the country as a whole it is very expensive labour indeed: it is produced at the price of endless suffering, broken lives, broken families, disease, ignorance, crime, tension, racialism and Nationalist rule.

There is only one power which can end this system: the systematic, massive, enlightened and determined organisation of the masses of the people in their national liberation organisations and trade unions. And for such organisation, Congress needs a new sort of plan; a plan not based upon emotional platform appeals and heroic gestures, but upon relentless work, day and night, throughout the land, in town and country; a plan for absolute efficiency, punctuality and scrupulous honesty in every aspect of work; a plan for systematic and thoroughgoing education, inside the movement and outside, so that every member and the whole world shall be clear beyond doubt what problems we are facing and how they are to be solved.

During the course of this article we have tried to indicate some of the problems to which our leaders should be turning their minds, at Conference and throughout 1959. We do not pretend to have all the answers, but we know that they are problems which the movement is capable of solving. We have not minimised the extent of the obstacles to freedom which confront the democratic majority of the people, but of one thing we are wholly convinced — those obstacles will be overcome, and the people shall govern.

A NEW AFRICA

True, the conquest of freedom in our country is not an easy task. The Nationalists will use every resource of terror, violence and intimidation to preserve their unjust rule; they will seek out disruptors, provocateurs and stooges; they will be helped by international imperialism from abroad, and by cowards and confused elements within. But whatever they may do, their rule is doomed.

A new Africa is in birth.

Whether we look at Egypt in the North, the new Union of Ghana and Guinea in the West, the great stirrings in Nigeria, now on the verge of independent self-government, even, right in the heart of the Union, the tremendous implications of self-government for Basutoland, we cannot but be aware that great things are happening about us. What was yesterday but a dream is coming true before our eyes. Africa is emerging from centuries of slumber. Her people are standing up to claim their birthright to their own land, freedom and full development. The alien Powers, one by one, reluctantly but inevitably, are being compelled to quit our Continent and make way for independent governments of Africans by Africans for Africans.

Each new territory that wins freedom serves as a beacon and an inspiration for the rest. As the area of freedom spreads in Africa the position of the imperialists, desperately clinging to their remaining "possessions", becomes more hopeless and untenable. The people are on the march. The little fountain of liberation has become a strongly-flowing stream, tomorrow it will become a mighty river of freedom in full tide, irresistably sweeping away to the sea the mud and filth of imperialism, the hateful centuries-old curse of alien control, piracy and robbery, of ignorance, poverty, backwardness, disease, exploitation and degradation of the human spirit.

This great prospect, the return and the rebirth of Africa, is no longer, as it might have seemed years ago, when Dr. Du Bois convoked the first pan-African Conference, the splendid but impractical vision of a few noble minds. It is a reality — one of the great realities of our times. People who try to think about and make plans for the future of Africa, whether they are in London or Paris or Washington or Pretoria, without taking into account this great reality looming over the next decade — they are the impractical ones, the dreamers, clinging to empty illusions.

We are living in the closing stages of the era of European domination over Africa. However unpalatable that may be to the Verwoerds and their counterparts in Europe, it is nonetheless the message that will be spelt out large at the All-African People's Congress at Ghana; it inspires and fortifies the members of the African National Congress as they come together for their annual December national conference filling them with the confidence that whatever hardships and sacrifices may lie ahead the final victory of freedom is assured.

MUCH ADO ABOUT PASTERNAK

A Review of "Doctor Zhivago"

by MICHAEL HARMEL

YESTERDAY Boris Pasternak was practically unknown in that part of the world which, absurdly, is called "the West". In the Soviet Union he has long been one of the best known men of letters: poet and celebrated translator into Russian of Shakespeare and other classics. If say, last year, the Nobel Prize committee had done anything so improbable as to present its annual award for literature to Pasternak, most Russians would have been delighted. And so would many of us abroad, for the hide-bound conservatives of the Nobel literary jury have for many years betrayed gross political prejudice, and such recognition for some eminent Soviet writer was long overdue.

Alas, in offering its 1958 prize to Pasternak, the jury was merely running true to form. The award was in fact a sly move in the cold war, a transparent attempt to embarrass and discredit the Soviet Union. It was not a recognition of Pasternak's many years of poetic and Shakespearian endeavour: it was a bravo for his all-advised action in sending his first novel "Doctor Zhivago" abroad for publication despite its rejection by a Soviet publishing house. "I fear the Greeks," Pasternak might well say, "especially when they bear gifts." For, in the circumstances, he could hardly, as a self-respecting Soviet citizen, do other than reject the prize — the first of its kind ever to be offered to a Soviet writer. All the award has done for Pasternak is to get him into hot water with his fellow-citizens, some of whom were apparently so annoyed with him that they demanded he get out of the country.

Meanwhile, of course, all this bohaai has meant plenty of free publicity for "Doctor Zhivago." The book is being lauded to the skies. The publishers of the English edition (Collins and Harvill Press: S.A. price 21s.6d.) modestly compare it with "War and Peace"; the English literary critics are freely flinging around phrases like "brilliant", "work of genius", and so on. In Johannesburg a Sunday newspaper is "adapting" it as a serial, and some crackpot outfit in America is even proposing to get it out in Russian and smuggle masses of copies into the Soviet Union as anti-Communist propaganda!

The book is anti-Communist no doubt; in fact it's anti- any sort of politics and schemes for human betterment: it's downright anti-social. But as "propaganda" it's bound to fall flatter than a pancake. Its only social message is the sort of commonplace selfishness summed up in the vulgar phrase: "B-gger, you Jack; I'm all right"; the conceit of the intellectual snob with his arrogant contempt for the masses. The masses are hardly likely to be impressed.

Zhivago, Pasternak's hero (I use the word in a double sense, for the author does not conceal his sympathy with his main character) is a figure out of the old Russia. One of the landed gentry, and married to an heiress, we see him as a medical student, officer in the first world war, doctor and poet. Around him, in the fires of war, revolution and civil war, his familiar old world collapses and a new world is born. But Zhivago does not really participate in these mighty upheavals — he is merely carried along with them like a piece of driftwood in a storm. Nor is he changed himself, as everyone else around him is changed. He remains an odd, eccentric figure from a nineteenth-century Russian novel — with a dash of Oblo-mov's pathetic futility; a trace of Raskolnikov's insane egoism; a smattering of Tolstoyan Christian anarchism. He remains, to the end, the perpetual university student, idly playing with half-formulated ideas, irresponsible, immature, parasitic. He is entirely occupied with himself, his family, his love-affairs.

As a student under the Tsarist regime, Zhivago shares the prevailing mood of intellectual revolt against the sordid oppression and stultification of the system — though he does nothing about it practically. The socialist revolution itself finds him apathetic, almost bored.

When he reads in the paper the announcement of the establishment of Soviet power, he is indeed "shaken and overwhelmed by the greatness of the moment and the thought of its significance for centuries to come."

"What splendid surgery!" he says to himself. "You take a knife and you cut out all the old stinking sores. Quite simply, without any nonsense, you take the old monster of injustice which has been accustomed for centuries to being bowed and scraped and curtsied to, and you sentence it to death."

Yet even then, he philosophises on, though the revolution has "real greatness", "real genius", it is "so misplaced and so untimely."

Indeed, for one like Zhivago (and one suspects, too, for one like Pasternak) the Revolution is "misplaced and untimely." He is far removed from understanding the real meaning and significance of what is happening about him: the storm into which life has thrown him. And he does not understand, until the very end, nor does he accept that it means the end of the old world, the old sort of parasitic environment, of which, however much he might have affected to despise it, he was a part. Nor that he, Zhivago, must change himself or perish.

Seeking to run away, to his wife's family estate in the country — in the midst of the civil war! — he is kidnapped by a band of partisans fighting the Whites, and forced, against his will, to serve as their medical officer. His family is exiled. A passionate love affair with another man's life ends in tragedy.

For a while, in the early twenties, the period of "NEP", when the Soviet Government allowed a limited development of capitalist "private enterprise" while it recovered its strength after the exhaustion of the civil wars and famine, Zhivago comes back to life. He writes "booklets", which one gathers consist of the sort of vague, confused and amateurish philosophising which occupy so much of this novel; short stories, sketches and poems. These volumes are printed privately and sold clandestinely at second-hand private-enterprise bookshops. But, one by one, his group of friends become attracted by Communism and desert him. He goes to live alone, "gave up medicine, neglected himself, stopped seeing his friends and lived in great poverty."

And that, for all practical purposes, is the end of the book. Pasternak has stuck on a little "Epilogue" (it occupies fourteen pages out of over 500) touching on the history of some of the minor characters in the war and post-war period. From these pages nothing of the epic grandeur of Russia's heroic resistance to Nazism emerges, nor her astounding post-war recovery and dramatic new leaps ahead. All that Pasternak can say (this time writing boldly himself as author, not putting the words into the mouths of characters) is that "the enlightenment and liberation which had been expected to come after the war had not come with victory" though "a presage of freedom was in the air." These are damning pages, artistically inexcusable, politically a pitiless self-exposure of the writer's limitations.

However, the bulk of the book, and its essence, does not consist of Pasternak's views on the 1950's but of the background, atmosphere and effects of the 1917 Revolution — all seen through the vision of a Zhivago. Now this method of making history come alive through the eyes and the experiences of an individual, or a small group of people, can be enormously effective and artistically valid, as Tolstoy did it, or Sholokov in his "Don" novels, or Ehrenburg in "The Fall of Paris." But, to be true and convincing the picture must emerge through the eyes and experiences of genuine, representative people, acting upon and being acted upon by events. Zhivago is not such a person; he is a detached, cynical observer, through whose distorting vision the great sweep of history is reduced to a series of annoying interruptions to his comforts, his plans, his passionate love affairs, his one-man researches in medicine, his hobby of verse-writing. It is the worm's-eye view of the revolution: an unedifying caricature.

In "Ten Days That Shook The World", John Reed reported, in an unforgettable little vignette, an argument between a soldier on sentry duty and "a tall young man with a supercilious expression, dressed in the uniform of a student."

“ ‘Now brother,’ answered the soldier earnestly, ‘you don’t understand. There are two classes, don’t you see, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. We—’

“ ‘Oh, I know that silly talk!’ broke in the student rudely. ‘A bunch of ignorant peasants like you hear somebody bawling a few catch-words. You don’t understand what they mean. You just echo them like a lot of parrots . . .’

“ ‘The soldier scratched his head ‘To me it seems perfectly simple — but then I’m not well educated. It seems like there are only two classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie—’

“ ‘There you go again with your silly formula!’ cried the student.

“ ‘—only two classes,’ went on the soldier, doggedly. ‘And whoever isn’t on one side is on the other.’”

I have often wondered whatever happened to that insufferable snob of a student and his like after the revolution. Now I know. He is Doctor Zhivago.

It is not easy to reach the necessary objectivity to judge such a book as this as literature, as a novel “pure and simple”, for it is neither pure nor simple. It is certainly not a “great book”; in many ways it does not even measure up to the standards required of a reasonably good novel. The plot is tortuous and unconvincing; as a story-teller Pasternak lacks technical skill; he repeatedly strains coincidence beyond the bounds of credibility. The book lacks structural unity.

Some have seen high tragedy in Zhivago’s story, that of a man from the past, unable to adjust himself to a new society; sublime lyricism in his loves. But to me it seems that, for an artist to evoke the true compassion, the fellow-feeling that goes to make up a great tragedy, his subject must have that in his character which draws compassion to him. Because Zhivago lacks humanity, compassion, humility, he cannot draw compassion or pity to himself. He lives and dies unto himself, bitterly scorning the companionship, the help and the pity of mankind.

Yet it is clear that Pasternak is a richly gifted writer. The translators of the English edition, Max Hayward and Manya Harari, speak of the “astonishing power, subtlety and range” of his prose. While such qualities hardly appear in either the prose or the verse (Pasternak appends some twenty of “Zhivago’s” poems) as translated, the book contains many passages of extraordinary lyrical power and beauty. And these come through despite the occasional infelicities of the translators — who, to the irritation of this reader anyway, have taken the liberty of peppering the text with numerous superfluous footnotes.

It is hardly surprising, on the whole, that “Doctor Zhivago” was rejected for publication in the Soviet Union. For if we, living so far away, can at least attempt to balance the book’s literary merits against its obvious shortcomings, this would be a great deal more difficult in a country where much of the novel, with its cheapening and belittlement of all they stand for, would be unendurably offensive to the public as a whole.

THE FORMATION OF

by

IN recent years I have concerned myself almost exclusively with the study of the formation of nations in Africa (south of the Sahara).

I would first like to say what I understand by the word "nation."

A generally recognised definition of that word does not yet exist in world science. It is often used in an extremely arbitrary way and its content can be very different. Sometimes the word "nation" is used for a people without considering its level of social development. In that case the words "nation" and "tribe" are used as interchangeable terms. In the literature dealing, for example, with the Zulus at the beginning of the nineteenth century, we find the expressions "Zulu nation" and "Zulu tribe"; the twentieth-century Ashantis are sometimes called a nation, sometimes a tribe. Sometimes the word "nation" is used for the whole population of a given country, without considering whether they speak a common language or different languages.

Webster's New World Dictionary gives for the word "nation" the following definition: "1. Stable community of individuals, which has developed in the course of history, having a common territory, an economic life, a culture and a specific language; 2. Population of a territory united under the same government, country, state; 3. (a) People or tribe; (b) tribe of Indians in North America, belonging to a confederation, such as the ten nations; (c) territory of such a tribe."

If we understand that word in such a vague way, the problem of the formation of nations does not even exist: nations have always existed; they have existed everywhere, and as a result there cannot be a problem of the formation of nations. On the contrary, if the word nation has a definite sense the problem exists of how and when are they formed.

It is by no means an argument about words. To give a definition of a "nation" is of vital importance for the peoples. A nation is not an imaginary or mystical concept — it is a very real phenomenon, and as such needs an exact definition, without which it is impossible to understand the national question which plays such an important part in the life of the peoples of the present time.

NATIONS IN AFRICA

ekin

A SOVIET VIEWPOINT ON IMPORTANT PROBLEMS IN AFRICA

All students of African affairs should find much to interest them in this article by the Soviet student of African affairs, Professor I. Pothekin, whose book on the Southern Bantu was recently published in Moscow. His approach typifies the thorough study's being made of African affairs today in the Soviet Union.

STALIN'S DEFINITION OF A NATION

To study the problem of the formation of nations, I start from the definition given by Stalin as early as 1913. According to this definition a nation represents a definite human community, strictly outlined. Several human communities exist; but not all can be considered as nations. A nation has specific characteristics.

The first criterion or characteristic feature is a common territory. Without a common territory a nation cannot exist. The most vivid example is that of the Jews. Disseminated throughout the world for a number of historical reasons, they did not form a nation. The Jews, living in different countries, did not have in common, any political, economic or cultural interests; many have for a long time forgotten their tongue and speak that of the people among whom they live. The Jews who established themselves in Israel do obviously form a nation; but I have not studied this question specially.

The second characteristic is a common tongue. Without a common tongue daily regular relations are not possible between individuals. If they speak different languages and cannot understand each other they are naturally unable to form a nation. The language is the expression of the

soul of a people. Everybody loves his own language and prefers to speak it.

From their prolonged common existence within the same territory and their continued relations based on a common language, people acquire customs, habits and a way of life common to all, similar artistic tastes, and a single spiritual and secular culture. Great and small nations differ from each other not only in language but also in culture and psychology. Every nation has its national culture which it loves and respects. This is the third characteristic of a nation.

The fourth is a common economy, i.e. that all parts of a territory inhabited by a particular people are economically linked together. There is a geographical division of labour and a regular exchange of products, in a word a single national market. A common economy creates links between the people living in the different parts of the country shared by a particular people, and creates the necessity for regular relations between them — which encourage the disappearance of local language differences such as dialects and the development of a single national language with its permanent expression in literature. It is only as the consequence of a common economy that the common characteristics of a spiritual and secular culture can develop. A common economy makes a single unity of the territory of a nation and gives a concrete meaning to territorial unity. It is on this basis that a good understanding of the common political and economic interests of a nation are founded.

Such are briefly the four main or characteristic criteria of a nation. This does not mean that a nation has no other characteristics, but these four are the main and fundamental ones.

If we understand the word nation in this way it becomes clear that a nation can only come into existence under the capitalist system, and that nations are the product of capitalist development.

This means that nations have not always existed; they are born, and are only formed at a definite point in human history. Under the feudal system they did not, and could not, exist. They could not exist because there was neither a common economy nor a national market. Feudal society is characterised by a subsistence, not a profit-making, economy.

This does not mean that under the feudal system the exchange of products did not exist at all and that there were no economic relations. No, an exchange of world products, economic relations, existed even under the primitive "commune" system. However, such relations were sporadic and not at all essential. Under the feudal system, economic relations between regions can or need not exist. Their non-existence cannot stop material production. This differs from the capitalist system in that economic relations have now become an essential condition of production.

A "NARODNOST"

We usually call the ethnic community living under a slave or feudal system a "narodnost". This word has no real equivalent in the West European languages. "Narodnost" comes from the word "narod" (people). From now on I shall use the word "narodnost".

The narodnost is an ethnical community of individuals who possess a common culture. Unlike a nation, it has no common economy. Moreover the three first characteristics of a narodnost differ from the corresponding characteristics of a nation. The feudal system is distinguished by the division of the land into small or feudal principalities and, in some cases, by the absence of a central state authority. In the capitalist system national states exist, generally including within their boundaries all the territory inhabited by a particular people.

The existence of regional dialects of a common language is typical of the feudal system. In many cases there is even a single literary language, but by reason of the illiteracy of the majority of the people it is used only by the upper classes while the mass of the people speak various dialects. Under the capitalist system it is only when large-scale economic relations are established along with mass migrations from one district to another, and with the development of education, that the literary language comes to be used by considerable sections of the community, being transformed into a single method of communication, and regional dialects disappear little by little.

The same thing can be said of the common culture; it is only fully developed under capitalism.

Finally the narodnost and the nation have a different class structure. In the first case the feudal lords and their peasants formed the basic classes. In the second case we find the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

In the primitive community there is no nation and no narodnost. The typical form of the ethnic community of the people was the tribe. What difference was there between a tribe and a narodnost?

A tribe is a classless community, while the narodnost is divided into classes. A narodnost forms when the change takes place from classless to class society.

A tribal community is based on blood relations: it is a community of people descended from the same actual or mythical ancestor. A narodnost is a territorial community, which includes people not on the basis of origin but on the basis of living within a given area: their geographical location in other words.

A narodnost grows out of the disintegration of the tribal community, of the mixing and merging of tribes and the emergence of classes. The mixing of tribes leads to the formation of a common language based on one of the tribal languages, while the others become regional dialects and finally disappear from history. The mixing and merging of tribes also lead inevitably to changes in the secular culture and psychology of the people: the tribal characteristics disappear and a single common culture emerges.

All these simultaneous processes have a definite economic basis which undergoes decisive modifications. The merging of the tribes and the transformation of the tribal system into narodnost are based on the replacement of one form of productive relations by another. It is precisely at this period that the co-operative and mutual-aid relations characteristic of the primitive community system, where classes did not yet exist, are superseded by relations of exploitation, domination and subordination, characteristic of all social and economic class systems.

The period of the formation of antagonistic classes and of the state is also the period when the tribe becomes a narodnost.

There is no precise line of demarcation between feudal society and the commune system. The transformation of the primitive social system into feudalism takes place little by little over a long period. Even when feudal-type relations predominate there are generally some fairly clearly distinguishable survivals of the primitive commune. These survivals are very enduring, and can even be found in capitalist society.

Similarly there is no precise line of demarcation between the tribe and the narodnost. The transformation of the tribe into the narodnost also takes place little by little over a long period.

The survivals of the clan and tribe structure and organisation can subsist for a long time after the formation of the narodnost. At the same time they are but relics, old moulds with a new content. In this case the decisive role is not played by the mould but by the most characteristic and dominating social relations of the period in question.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

To sum up: the ethnic community of the peoples goes through several stages of development: tribe, narodnost, nation.

The passage from one form to another broadly corresponds, but only broadly, to the development of the socio-economic systems: the narodnost is formed during the transformation of the primitive commune system into slavery or feudalism; the nation develops out of the passage from the feudal to the capitalist system.

In taking this interpretation of the term nation as a basis for our study of the ethnic development of the African peoples at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, we easily reach the conclusion that there was not and could not be any nation in Africa at that time. It could not exist because there was no capitalist society.

In the African countries where more or less developed relations of a feudal type already existed, the transformation of the tribe into the narodnost was already taking place. There was clearly a narodnost in the case of the Egyptians, Moroccans, Tunisians, Algerians, Yorubas, Ashantis, Bagandas and others. The tribal organisation of these peoples, the Egyptians for example, had already completely disintegrated by this time, although still existing amongst other peoples.

In my book on the Southern Bantus, I made a special study of the development of the forms taken by the ethnic community of the Zulus, Xosas, Basutos and Bechuanas. I made detailed studies of the socio-economic system of the Southern Bantus at the beginning of the century, and submitted my conclusions to the Cambridge International Congress of Orientalists of 1954. I put them in this way: we see a picture of the primitive commune system at the last stage of development; the classical structure still exists but already has lost its first stability; private property exists and there are rich and poor, but without the community having split into antagonistic classes; the control of affairs is concentrated in the hands of wealthy dynastic families, but no state apparatus of coercion as yet exists. We conclude that the Southern Bantus were on the borderline between class and classless society: between a tribe and a narodnost.

THE ZULUS

I will deal more especially with the formation of the Zulu narodnost in the South African province of Natal. At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were about 100 independent tribes in Natal. There was no Zulu narodnost. There was no common Zulu language, but a multitude of tribal languages divided into two groups, the Tekela and the Ntungwa.

In the 1820's, Chaka, chief of the Zulu tribe, set out to bring all the Natal tribes under his rule.

Chaka's campaigns had an enormous influence on the Natal tribes. After being defeated, many tribes broke up and dispersed in different directions, giving rise to a mass tribal migration. Some disappeared purely and simply from the ethnic range of Natal, while others increased in number by absorbing newcomers from other tribes. The tribal structure being destroyed, the mixing of the tribes led to the formation of the Zulu narodnost. At the same time the old tribal divisions were replaced by a central authority based on armed force. This marked the beginning of the formation of the Zulu state.

"Independent tribes . . . ceased to be independent, the governing families were hounded out or exterminated, all the tribes without distinction were amalgamated and together they could be called the Zulu nation with Chaka at their head," wrote Bryant (A. T. Bryant: *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, p. 233).

In the same way as the Zulu tribe took the lead in the powerful process of unifying the tribes in a single state, so also the Zulu language gradually became the common medium of communication for all the tribes, and supplanted all the other tribal languages. The men of Chaka's army spoke a Zulu language of the Ntungwa group and as this army included adult men from all the the tribes the Ntungwa language rapidly spread throughout the vast territory of Natal. According to Bryant the Tekela languages were retained for a certain time by the women but by the 1920's there only remained a few old women who spoke it. (A. T. Bryant: *A Zulu-English Dictionary*—Maritzburg 1815, p. 60).

A long period of determined struggle by the Zulus against Anglo-Boer colonisation then ensued during which the tribal structures disintegrated still further and the tribes intermixed still more.

At the end of the nineteenth century the Zulu narodnost, united in a common territory, language and culture, was already born in the territory of Natal.

The Xosas, Basutos and Bechuanas underwent a different process of transformation from tribe to narodnost, but nonetheless the process was concluded by the beginning of the twentieth century. This process is generally different for each people, and to give a general picture of the formation of the different narodnosts on the African continent the history of each people would have to be studied individually.

But not all the African people went through this process before the end of the nineteenth century, i.e. before European colonisation. In many regions, far from being any nation there was not even as yet a narodnost. Colonialisation found them at the stage of the primitive community with the characteristics of tribal organisation.

Colonialisation interrupted the natural course of the history of the African peoples and twisted the process of their ethnic development. At the present time it is very difficult to get a full appreciation of the stage of ethnic development reached by the African people. One thing only is clear: the process continues. In some regions the tribes are changing into narodnosts and in others existing narodnosts are becoming nations.

(The second part of this article will appear in our next issue.)

BASUTOLAND ADVANCES

by DAN TLOOME

BASUTOLAND, the land of the sons of Moshoeshoe, is gradually moving towards self-rule. The Basutoland National Council passed a resolution in September, 1955, asking for legislative powers in all internal matters. In short, the Basutos are demanding that the Council — at present a mere consultative body — be given power to make laws in all internal matters affecting the country. The Resident Commissioner and the Departmental heads of his staff should not dominate but advise the Council.

In pursuance of this resolution, the Earl of Home, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, has invited a delegation, representing the Basutoland National Council, to visit London for talks on their proposals for constitutional advance in Basutoland. The delegation is accompanied by Mr. A. G. T. Chaplain, Resident Commissioner, and also by a constitutional adviser, Professor D. Cowen, of Cape Town University.

These proposals, formulated in the form of a joint report by two committees, do not reflect the personal opinion of individuals, but represent the views of outstanding individuals and organised bodies, who gave evidence before the Committees. The National Council has appointed two Committees to give thorough examination to the whole question of the Chieftainship in Basutoland, and to consider constitutional reform, required to meet the present social and political development of the inhabitants of the country.

MOSHOESHOE AND BASUTOLAND

The story of Basutoland is bound up very largely with the story of Moshoeshoe, the founder of the nation, and one of the outstanding geniuses of African, indeed of world history. Under his leadership the scattered groups of clans, settled along the banks of the Caledon River, and often at war among themselves, were formed into a united people, with a common territory, language, culture and economy, powerful enough to survive the combined attacks of British and Boer imperialism and to preserve their identity and a large part of their homeland from the fate which overcame the African peoples of the surrounding territories.

The rise of Moshoeshoe as a popular and outstanding Chief of his time, stems from his association with Chief Mohlomi, who died eight years before the 'wars of Calamity', as they are called. Mohlomi was a wandering philosopher. He practised and preached a wide toleration, showed goodwill to all, detested war and always spoke against it. Before he died, he contacted a young and ambitious chief of his clan, by name of Moshoeshoe, who was already attracting a growing number of followers. Mohlomi thoroughly and completely imbued the younger man with his philosophy, and prophesied for him a great future and started him off on a road from which Moshoeshoe never swerved. Moshoeshoe was a man of outstanding wisdom and diplomacy. Always adaptable and alive to new impressions, his famous war tactics included, among others, the idea of fortifying and holding the hill fortresses which are found all down the valley of the Caledon River, and he made great use of rock slides, keeping masses of heavy stones piled up ready for launching. His power lay in his implicit faith in the people. Always considering himself a servant of the people, he is reputed never to have been an absolute or despotic ruler. Nothing could swerve him from his faith in the Basuto maxim, so frequently quoted:

"Morena ke Morena ka batho" — "A chief is a chief through the people."

Moshoeshoe was not only a nation-builder, great general, a great statesman-diplomat, and a pioneer democrat; he was in many other ways a thinker of most outstanding originality and power, and a pioneer of the national liberation movement in Africa.

He and his people suffered endlessly from the encroachments, bad faith and aggression of the White intruders. Yet he never gave way to crude anti-White racialism, or flung his warriors, armed with assegais, to a useless death against the guns and horsemen of the invader. He determined to take over and use for the advancement of his people whatever the Europeans had that might be useful to them. He saw to it that his people acquired firearms, and at the time of his death and for many years afterwards there was no Mosutu man without a rifle. He imported horses, and improved the stock, so that the Basuto pony became famous as ideally adapted to this mountainous country. He invited missionaries, both Protestant and Roman Catholic to his country freely, and made the fullest use of their services for spreading literacy and other useful accomplishments among the people. He even made use of the services of one, Casalis, virtually as his foreign secretary. Yet he always saw to it that — unlike other parts of Africa — the missionaries remained the servants of the people and did not become their masters. "We become Basutos, from today onwards our destinies and those of the tribe are identical," wrote Casalis; years afterwards when another missionary, Mabile, attempted to lay down the law, Chief Letsie said: "I will see whether Mabile or myself is chief." Mabile had to climb down.

PIONEER OF UNITY

As early as 1849, Moshoeshoë had already realised that the survival of the Basuto as a national group lay in the idea of confederation of all the African tribes and a united fight against the White encroachers. He sent ambassadors to the Zulus, the Xosa, the Bechuana and to Adam Kok, the great Coloured leader, head of the Griqua State, to propose agreement and unity. He was always ready to lend his aid to other peoples struggling to maintain or regain their independence.

But he was ahead of his time. It was not until 1912, with the founding of the African National Congress, that his great dream of a united freedom struggle in Southern Africa, was to begin to become a reality. The only course open to him was to mobilise the Basutos, to fight back against attacks as well as he could, and to preserve as much of the independence and integrity of the motherland as possible.

Moshoeshoe saw that it was impossible to defend Basutoland against a united front of the British Government, on one hand, and the Orange Free State on the other. Hence all his diplomatic efforts were directed to preventing the creation of such a united front. He sought the aid and protection of Britain against the continual encroachment of the Free Staters.

In fact the Basuto were never conquered or defeated in a major battle, and their fortress of Thaba Bosiu remained inviolate until the end. But though they lost no battles, and could not be defeated in battle, they could not survive alone against the superior resources of imperialism. In asking for British "Protection" Moshoeshoe was sacrificing a part of Basuto independence in order to preserve the very existence of his people. That protection, however, was to cost the Basuto dear. Not only did the British deprive the Basuto of their independence, sending in their administrators and magistrates, and destroying the people's traditional democratic institutions; they also handed over a very large and fertile part of the country to the Orange Free State. The whole rich and fertile territory to the West of the Caledon — today the most prosperous part of the O.F.S. — was "awarded" to the Boers, when Britain was called in to mediate in a war in which the Free Staters had actually been defeated by the Basuto. The Basuto learnt, as the Czechs and others were to learn, that Britain is used to appeasing aggressors with awards of other people's territory.

BASUTOLAND TODAY

Hence, Basutoland today is confined to a small and very mountainous territory of about 10,000 square miles, entirely surrounded by the Union. The Caledon river forms its northern and western boundaries with the O.F.S. Over two-thirds of the country are occupied by the Drakensberg and Maluti mountains; on the slopes of which the skilful Basuto farmers wrest a bare living from the soil. But the country cannot support its

600,000 inhabitants. Year after year thousands of Basuto make their way into the Union, to be exploited as cheap labour on Witwatersrand mines and Free State farms.

The British have done nothing to develop the territory economically. Apart from home crafts, there are no industries. The people live in great poverty.

Yet, thanks to the wise and far-seeing policy of Moshoeshe, the country has not — like Swaziland and Bechuanaland — become the prey of foreign land-sharks and millionaire farmers. No foreigner may own land in Basutoland, or even settle there without express permission. The land is vested in the people, through the chiefs. Traders may occupy premises by permission, but on their departing the ground on which their premises are sited revert to the people.

As a result, only about a thousand Europeans — officials and missionaries — are to be found in Basutoland. The immigrants — Africans from other tribes, and a small Indian community — have become or are becoming assimilated with the Basutoland population.

CHANGE IN SOCIETY

The struggle of the people of Basutoland, like all struggles that are characterised by the laws of human and historical development of any given society, has assumed various phases at different periods.

Here is a people that has today organised itself into a united Basuto nation, bound together by its national aspirations and by the desire to emancipate its country from economic backwardness, and to raise the political and cultural development of its people. What used to be the country of a disunited and backward folk, fighting desperately, under the leadership and guidance of Chief Moshoeshe, to protect their country from attempted rape by the British and Boer troops, is today a country of an advancing people, emerging gradually from the dark ages into a society of workers, peasants, intellectuals and middle class. A society politically conscious and beginning to think not only in terms of conditions surrounding Basutoland, but also in terms of the status of Basutoland in relation to world affairs, and the development of its people towards self-rule and independence.

THE DEMOCRATIC TRADITION

The democratic tradition of Moshoeshe has borne fruit in our times. The great chief was no dictator; he consulted leading chiefs and others on day to day matters, and in all matters of importance it was customary to sound public opinion at national gatherings called 'the Pit.so.' These assemblies were attended by the chiefs and all men. All had the right to speak.

It was these assemblies which ultimately led to the formation of the present National Council. The idea of the Council itself was first mooted as far back as 1890, but the Council met for the first time in 1903. The regulations provided for the Council to consist of not more than 100 members; five being nominated by the Resident Commissioner, and the rest by the Paramount Chief; with the Resident Commissioner as president. The term of office of members was to be one year. Since then, the Council has undergone various transformations by way of improvement, but, as stated above, it has always remained a consultative body with no legislative powers.

It is this National Council which, at its 51st session in September 1955, passed the famous Motion 90, asking for self-rule. To this the Secretary of State has replied indicating his preparedness to consider the proposals, but making it clear that power to make laws by the Council would be in regard only to internal matters affecting the Basuto alone, but not in regard to matters affecting people other than the Basuto or countries other than Basutoland.

The Commissioner, appointed by the National Council, has now produced a report on constitutional reform and Chieftainship Affairs. The report embodies proposals, the broad principles and structure of which are as follows:-

It is recommended that Basutoland should be ruled by a Central Government, having under its wing (a) a legislature, (b) an Executive Council, (c) Local Government composed of District Councils, (d) the College of Chiefs, composed of the Paramount and Ward Chiefs of Basutoland, the Paramount Chief to become the President of the College. The College shall have powers to elect an action committee charged with doing the day to day work of the College. And finally, there would be (e) the Judiciary and the Civil Service.

This is the structure of the proposals contained in the report of the Commission, whose representatives will soon be flying to London for discussions. The proposals reflect a progressive outlook by the Basutos and their chiefs; they endorse the theory that no power on earth can stand in the way of a closely organised and advancing people; they reflect the reaction and the attitude of the Basuto in no uncertain terms, towards the issue of the incorporation of the country into the Union of South Africa. The proposals are a total rejection of the theory of Apartheid and all its

repressive measures practised by South Africa; they have clearly indicated that the desires and aspirations of the people of Basutoland are showing inclinations of self-rule and independence. We have no illusions regarding the proposals as the final solution of emancipating Basutoland from British Imperialism, but there can be no doubt that an advance is being made, and if the proposals are accepted, the people of Basutoland will have laid a stepping stone towards a democratic Basutoland of the people, by the people, for the people.

THE MENACE OF INCORPORATION

In some respects the Basuto people of today are still confronted by similar problems to those which faced their ancestors of a hundred years ago. Lesotho does not need Britain. Her people are fully capable of running their own affairs; they do not need British-appointed officials, living on Basuto taxes; they can and should be able to stand up as equals among the nations of the world, conducting their own foreign policy, and developing their own country.

But so long as the country remains surrounded by the Union, and so long as the Union is dominated by greedy imperialistic apartheid politicians, continually regarding the spread of democratic and self-governing institutions in Basutoland as a threat and a challenge to their own despotism and oppression, so long independence in Basutoland will never be complete or secure.

Hence, the future development of a free, independent and progressive Basutoland, peacefully developing towards her destiny, is closely bound up with the development and success of the democratic people's movement in the Union of South Africa. Naturally, the closest ties of friendship should therefore exist between such bodies as the Basutoland African Congress and the Congress alliance in our country; and it is inspiring to be able to record that such ties already exist and are being brought closer in a struggle which, in the end, is a common one.

As for us in the Union, we shall struggle to the end against all attempts to enforce the incorporation of our brothers in Basutoland against their will. And we shall regard with the most lively sympathy and encouragement every step taken by the great Basuto nation along the road to independence and self-government.

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